The New Criterion

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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Volume 1, Number 10 *June* 1983

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Stanislaw Barańczak's poetry has appeared most recently in *Hunts and Wings,* an anthology of Polish poetry written since 1968.

Patricia Blake, an associate editor at *Time,* is a writer and critic. Her essay is excerpted from her introduction to *Writers in Russia, 1917-1978,* the collection of Max Hayward's writings that she has edited and that will be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in July.

Gail Buckland reviewed Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present* in the February issue of *The New Criterion.*

Hortense Calisher's new novel, *Mysteries of Motion,* will be published by Doubleday in October.

Charles Dempsey is professor of Italian Renaissance and Baroque art at Johns Hopkins University.

Herb Greer is an American playwright and author living in England.

Donald Hall is a poet whose most recent book is a collection of essays entitled *The Weather for Poetry,* published by the University of Michigan Press.

Samuel Lipman is the music critic of *Commentary* and the author of *Music after Modernism.*

James Lord, author of *A Giacometti Portrait,* has been working for many years on a biography of Alberto Giacometti. The present article is drawn from material relevant to this work in progress.

Norman Podhoretz is the editor of *Commentary.* His review of *Camus* by Patrick McCarthy appeared in the November issue of *The New Criterion.*

The New Criterion is published monthly except July and August by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc., 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. Publication Number ISSN 0734-0222. June, 1983, Volume I, Number 10. Subscription rates: $27 for one year, $50 for two. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send changes of address to 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019.

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Distributed in England by Periodicals in Particular, 1 Prince of Wales Passage, 117 Hampstead Road, London, NW1. Editorial/business correspondence should be addressed to The New Criterion, 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019. (212) 247-6980.
Advertising representative: Catherine Shanley, 663 Fifth Ave., NYC. (212) 268-2162; 757-6454.

The New Criterion is designed by Alvin and James Eisenman and printed by the Eastern Press of New Haven, Connecticut.

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Vanity Fair: an autopsy

by Hilton Kramer

Nothing in the recent antics of American publishing has been quite as spectacular, or quite as revealing, as the swift and ignominious collapse of the new *Vanity Fair* just as the magazine's third issue was reaching disgruntled subscribers in the last week of April. It was already apparent in February, when the inaugural (March) issue made its appearance, that something had gone seriously wrong with this project to revive a magazine that had become something of a myth in publishing circles since it suspended publication nearly half a century ago. With the second issue in hand in late March, all curiosity and suspense shifted from the magazine itself—which was clearly a flop—to whatever strategy its owners, the Condé Nast organization, might devise to save some face and salvage what it could from the wreckage of the operation. The end came on April 26 with the announcement that Leo Lerman would replace Richard Locke as the editor of *Vanity Fair,* and a statement the next day by S. I. Newhouse, Jr., the chairman at Condé Nast, that the magazine would now "pursue a new approach."

Here, plainly, was failure on a colossal scale—the kind of failure that costs a magazine's owners not only many millions of dollars but the even more valuable, if less tangible, asset of a reputation for shrewd and far seeing judgment both in business and editorial matters. Yet the patent failure of this mighty enterprise, resulting in the ouster of its founding editor and the hurried appointment of a reliable operative from within the Condé Nast organization as his successor, is only part of what makes this collapse a highly instructive episode in contemporary cultural life. Almost as interesting as the failure itself is the way it has been reported in the press and talked about in the publishing world. One could scarcely guess, on the basis of this discussion, that something more than the competence or the personality of the ousted editor might have been involved in this costly fiasco. There has hardly been a hint or a suggestion that the disaster might, after all, have owed something to the actual *content* of the magazine—not only to the words and pictures that adorned its pages but to the intellectual ethos that governed their conception and the particular social views that shaped virtually every editorial decision that went into their selection. It is precisely this double failure—of the magazine itself, and of the way its collapse has been perceived and reported—that gives to this otherwise dismal event a certain historical resonance.

The story is not lacking in some wonderful ironies, of course. No other defunct magazine from the early decades of twentieth-century commercial publishing in this country—not even Mencken and Nathan's *Smart Set,* which in fact played a more important role in shaping literary taste and codifying cultural values—has lately been a match for the old *Vanity Fair* in its power to inspire runaway dreams of revival and emu-

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lation. Among certain people in the publishing world—and not only at Condé Nast—the *Vanity Fair* that Frank Crowninshield produced in the years 1914-1936 had long enjoyed the status of a lost ideal, and there must have been many an aspiring editor over the years who harbored the secret (or not so secret) desire to play a role in seeing this lost ideal restored to life and given something like its old eminence and éclat.

The reasons for this are not exactly mysterious, though they are rarely the reasons we find openly acknowledged in public discussions of *Vanity Fair.* For they have mainly to do with the appeals of snobbery. And I don't mean intellectual snobbery, either—although intellectual snobbery, or at least some illusion or simulacrum of it, was certainly one of the elements that proved to be indispensable to the success of the old *Vanity Fair.* In the shrewd formula that Frank Crowninshield devised for the magazine in its heyday, art and intellect—and, for that matter, politics too—were given a place, but it was a place carefully and systematically subordinated to and circumscribed by the interests of fashion. The ornaments of culture were admitted to the limelight, but only on condition that they be attired in the trappings of glamour and celebrity—and thus subtly altered, if not altogether neutered. More often than not, it was in the ornaments of popular culture—most especially the movies and the Broadway theater, whose stars were just then, in the period between the two world wars, displacing the remnants of royalty and the eminences of high society as universal emblems of glamour and distinction—that *Vanity Fair* found much of the material that really lent itself to this kind of exploitation. Yet high art and even ideas were not to be excluded. They were indeed admissible—and at times even essential—as long as they could be made to seem chic and snobbish and undemanding. (Thinking about the intellectual temper of the old *Vanity Fair,* I am sometimes reminded of Desmond MacCarthy's point about Cocteau—"ratiocination seems to strike him as a form of insincerity.") It was upon a crasser kind of snobbery, however—in an attitude of envy and servility toward money and position and taste, and an attitude of condescension and contempt where these were felt to be lacking—that the real appeal of *Vanity Fair* was founded. Everything else belonged, so to speak, to the superstructure.

It was a brilliant formula for success in its day—a magazine that combined, in whatever proportions the traffic would bear, both glamour and intellect, gossip and art, celebrities and culture, and all packaged in a format that satisfied the taste of its readers for something rich and luxurious without unduly taxing their capacity for cerebration or discrimination. But it was a formula whose time had passed years before the official demise of the magazine in 1936. In truth, Frank Crowninshield's *Vanity Fair* had always been dependent on a readership whose purchasing power far exceeded its critical faculties, and it was therefore entirely appropriate that when the end came the magazine was incorporated into the pages of *Vogue,* where such a readership can be assumed to be guaranteed. And it was in the pages of *Vogue* that the ghost of *Vanity Fair* had peacefully reposed for these forty-seven years—until disturbed by this ill-fated attempt at disinterment under the editorship of Richard Locke.

A magazine like the old *Vanity Fair* cannot, of course, be revived in any literal sense half a century after its death. Even in the rarefied purlieus of the Condé Nast organization, this much seems to have been understood from the outset. The trick was to come up with some equivalent formula for today—something as appropriate to the appeals of snobbery in the America of the 1980s as Frank Crowninshield's *Vanity Fair* had proved to be for a certain American readership in the 1920s.

The problem was not an easy one, alas. So much has changed in the life of the country and in the life of its culture since the good old days when *Vanity Fair* could lord it over the plebes with some knowing glimpses of high life, a few timid tastes of modern art, and a morsel or two of such daring modern

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writers as, say, Aldous Huxley. Now all the modern artists are on permanent view in the museums, and all the modern writers are in paperback. As for what nowadays passes for high life, there seems hardly enough left to fill the other Condé Nast magazines that already specialize in its glamourization. To get a firm purchase on the levers of snobbery is clearly no longer the simple task it once was.

Where could they turn? The arts, though plainly necessary to such a project, are no longer in themselves sufficient for the task. After all, everybody now loves the arts, no matter how innovative or outrageous these arts might be said to be. The academy, the government, the corporations, the mass media—all are now vying to praise and support and promote them. And while it is not quite true that there is no snob value left to the arts, it is in fact the case that the snobbery quotient is now so diminished that no sound business venture can any longer be based on a belief in its size or durability.

Where, then, could the new *Vanity Fair* find its point of entry? Sex? Any open attempt in this direction would probably have proved to be unpalatable to the kind of advertisers the magazine was seeking, and in any case the appeals of sex—at least in magazines—tend to be the opposite of snobbish. Food? Alas, the only thing left to be snobbish about is the snobbery that now surrounds the whole subject. It must have seemed as if snobbery itself had become more than a bit problematic, possibly even obsolete.

Yet there remained one area of American life where something akin to its old appeals continued to cast an undiminished spell—or seemed to, anyway—and that was in the realm of politics. Or more precisely, at the juncture where politics and culture—or should we say, politics and "life style"?—meet and blur the boundaries separating their respective domains. There, as nowhere else, the appeals of snobbery remain sharply defined. Nothing else nowadays gives people of a certain taste such a confident sense of the chasm that divides "us" from "them." Politics for such people is, one might say, the new aesthetics, and, like aesthetics of any kind, it has a curious way of affecting every object and gesture that falls within its line of vision. If there was to be a new *Vanity Fair,* then this was surely the realm to be focused on and exploited.

Yet even here there was a formidable obstacle to be overcome—namely, the sheer number of publications already at work on the same material. *The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books,* whole departments or sections of the daily and Sunday editions of *The New York Times*—there was no end to the competition already entrenched and prospering. Was there really room for another contender in this crowded field? This was the mighty challenge that Condé Nast faced in mounting a new *Vanity Fair,* and the success of the venture was obviously thought to depend on the acquisition of an editor who was a practiced hand at cultivating this particular terrain—an editor, moreover, who could be counted upon to apply a special kind of single-mindedness to the task. Ideally, such an editor would bring to this challenge a mind unburdened by an overdeveloped sense of humor, undistracted by any sense of irony, complexity, or contradiction about the world in which we live, and unembarrassed at the prospect of recycling the views of that cadre of writers who were already famous for telling us how rotten our country is and for codifying the attitudes deemed essential to any persuasive demonstration of "our" superiority to it.

In Richard Locke the executives at Condé Nast must have felt they had indeed found the ideal editor they were seeking. For years he had labored—and not entirely unsuccessfully—at making *The New York Times Book Review* a perfect vehicle for the new political aesthetics. He had shown himself to be especially resourceful at promoting the reputations of writers who conformed to its special standards and at the corollary task of either defaming or ignoring those who had the effrontery or misfortune to fall short of its peculiar strictures. If his efforts were

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nonetheless incomplete and even frustrated at times and some contrary view managed to insinuate itself into the pages of his publication, he could hardly be blamed for that. At the *Book Review* he had always been the hardworking deputy and never the editor officially in charge, and *The Times* is in any case too large and intractable an organization for the will of a single employee—no matter how determined—to prevail on every occasion. Yet it must be said that he had done his job well, and destiny had clearly marked him as an editor who would accomplish great things if given the opportunity and the power.

In the new *Vanity Fair* he was given the opportunity, and there was apparently never any question that he would also have the power. Yet the result must have caused even Mr. Locke's most ardent admirers a certain dismay even before the first issue of the magazine went to press. One scarcely needed the instincts of a successful press lord to understand that what such a magazine required, above all else, for an instant success was a dazzling sense of freshness and flair—a sense of style so captivating and seductive that even the grimmest and most negative views would be caught up in the general air of excitement and made to seem glamourous and new. What in fact the new *Vanity Fair* gave us in its very first issue was something so stale and so predictable—certainly predictable to anyone familiar with the course of Mr. Locke's career—and so totally devoid of charm or enchantment that it could only have seemed fresh or exciting to some lunar visitor who had never had an opportunity to peruse the pages of *The Times, The New York Review, The Village Voice, The Nation,* and the sundry other publications that served as a source and an inspiration. From the caricatures of David Levine and the graphics of Andy Warhol to the animadversions of Gore Vidal and the incontinent blather of John Leonard, everything about the new *Vanity Fair* had the look and sound and feel of something shopworn and secondhand.

Surely, one felt, one had read all this stuff before—and many, many times. And it was not as if the material was exactly aging well. What the magazine seemed to resemble more than anything else was a class reunion—the class, of course, of the Sixties—and they weren't aging so very well, either. What an embarrassment it must have been to the old hands at Condé Nast! For whatever they might be said to lack in the way of intellectual discrimination or quality of mind, they had always been very adept at spotting trends and adapting to new fashions, and they had always been militant about resisting the more ponderous forms of boredom. There must have been more than a few occasions when they felt themselves to be victims of a hijack or a hoax—professional pacesetters involuntarily held captive in the land of déjà vu.

Mr. Locke gave them no quarter. Robert Stone writing about Joan Didion writing about El Salvador, Kai Erikson writing about Peter Matthiessen writing about the American Indian Movement, Ronald Steel re-christening the old isolationism as the new "self-interest" (as if it were not in our self-interest to defend ourselves against the avowed intention of our enemies to destroy us)—this could hardly have been the stuff that Condé Nast dreams are made of. For amusement there were paintings by Philip Burke that made President Reagan look unmistakably more threatening and certainly more sinister than that true connoisseur of self-interest, Mr. Andropov. Even the columns devoted to the arts offered little or no relief. The Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz was praised for *not* being a "cold war scold" by the former literary editor of *The Nation* while the art of the Seventies was denounced as nothing but the work of "toothless tigers of the avant-garde" by the former art critic of *The Village Voice.* (One wondered if he meant to include the work of Alexander Liberman in this classification.) By the time the reader got to Gabriel García Márquez's novella, with its tawdry Botero illustrations, he might very well feel he had at last been offered some comic relief.

The only thing to be said for the two sub-

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sequent issues of the magazine is that there was less of them to get through. The writing had certainly not improved, and the design reached a nadir even by the standards set in the first issue. (Opinions will always differ, I suppose, whether the worst of the *Vanity Fair* layouts was the one that pitted Robert Penn Warren against Miss Piggy or the one that used Matisse and Bill Brandt to make hash of each other's work.) The April issue did introduce one new feature, however—Helen Vendler's instant seminar on a poem by Amy Clampitt published for the first time in the same issue. ("Like Keats, Clampitt seeks the inner sanctuary where the veiled goddess sits," etc.) May gave John Leonard an opportunity to discover the forbidden subject of censorship and Peter Schjeldahl a rare chance to discuss the Old Masters on exhibition in "The Vatican Collections" exhibition at the Met ("It's all rather like Hannibal crossing the Alps to deliver a bag of groceries"). After sequestering himself in the tomb of Mailer's *Ancient Evenings,* Walter Clemons emerged to announce to the world that "I think he's done it." Whether or not Mailer had "done it" is another of those questions on which opinions will vary, but everyone by then was in agreement about what Mr. Locke had done. He had sent *Vanity Fair* to the bottom in record time, and Mr. Lerman, the venerable features editor of *Vogue,* was called in to salvage what he could.

Frank Crowninshield had founded the old *Vanity Fair* on the notion that the image of the good life, no matter how illusory it might be, would exert an irresistible appeal for people with a certain taste and income, and he proved to be correct. Mr. Locke's *Vanity Fair* was founded on a very different notion—that the image of America and its culture as the bad life was now so completely established as an unquestioned datum for a large and affluent readership in this country that a new magazine need only make the usual ritual appeals to nihilism and national self-criticism in order to become a resounding success. This, after all, was the formula that had worked at the *Times Book Review.* This had been the message of the new political aesthetics for as long as Mr. Locke had been functioning on the publishing scene—the message that had been so taken to heart by all those people who wanted to get ahead, and indeed to get to the top, in a society whose values they professed to despise and denounce. In the end he proved to be a captive of his own illusions. It is surely too early to announce the demise of the political aesthetic that has prevailed for so many years in our cultural life, but the collapse of *Vanity Fair* does come as a salutary reminder that things are not quite what they used to be.

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Henry Adams: the "powerless" intellectual in America

by Norman Podhoretz

In 1917, about a year before he died, Henry Adams remarked in a letter to one of his oldest friends: "I once wrote some books myself, but no one has even mentioned the fact to me for more than a generation. I have a vague recollection that once some young person *did* mention an anecdote to me that came from one of my books and that he attributed it to some one else." A good deal of what is most characteristic of Adams is contained in these two valedictory sentences written at the age of seventy-nine. They are haughty; they are drenched in bitterness; and they ignore any and all realities that might spoil the dramatic effect at which they aim. The reader of these sentences would never suspect, for example, that only four years earlier a privately printed book by Adams, which he had finally allowed a commercial publisher to issue after an endless courtship, had broken all the firm's records for advance sales. Nor would anyone suspect that two years later, in 1915, the same firm would try once again to get the rights to yet another of his privately printed books (which, said the editor, aroused in him "more publishing covetousness" than any book he had ever read).

But whatever might have been the case during his own lifetime, the world has never stopped talking about Henry Adams since his death. Upon its release to the general public exactly six months after he died, the book which had aroused so much "publishing covetousness" in its future editor achieved, under the title *The Education of Henry Adams,* an even greater commercial and critical success than its record-breaking predecessor, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.* Today, sixty-five years later, both of these works of his old age, as well as most of his earlier ones, are still in print. Moreover, articles and books about Adams keep being produced at a rate that might have gratified even a vanity as large as his. In the last few years alone, for example, we have had one book (by Professor William Dusinberre) celebrating the major work of Adams's middle period, the nine-volume *History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison,* and another (a posthumously published study by the eminent critic R. P. Blackmur) treating Adams in general with almost as much reverence as he himself treated the Virgin Mary in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.* Now J. C. Levenson (the author of an earlier critical study of Adams), Ernest Samuels (whose authoritative three-volume biography of Adams was completed in 1964), and two other literary scholars (Charles Vandersee and Viola Hopkins Winner) have brought forth the first three volumes of a definitive edition of *The Letters of Henry Adams.*[1]

Running altogether to nearly two thou-

1 *The Letters of Henry Adams,* Harvard University Press. Volume I covers the years 1858-1868, Volume II 1868-1885, and Volume III 1886-1892. The three volumes are sold as a set for $100.

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sand large and closely printed pages, these massive volumes take us from 1858 (when Adams was only twenty) to 1892, when he still had a quarter of a century to live. Three more volumes, of at least equivalent bulk, will therefore be required to complete the project. Yet so prolific a correspondent was Adams that not even the full six volumes will include all his extant letters. Of the 1,519 letters that have survived for the period covered by the first three volumes, "only" 1,277 have been included. Of these, nearly three-quarters have been published before, either in part or in full. The contribution of these volumes is thus 549 new letters and 261 complete texts of old letters previously available in abridged or expurgated form.

No doubt there are specialists who will think this contribution a significant one. But speaking as a general reader, I have to say that the work and the expense that went into this undertaking are not self-evidently justified by the results. First of all, anyone who approaches these letters more or less cold will find them very hard to follow. Adams in his early and middle years was not nearly so allusive and elliptical a stylist as he became toward the end of his life, but these letters are so crowded with people, events, and episodes about which even a reasonably well-informed reader today is bound to be either ignorant or vague that they are often impenetrable. Nor do the stingy little notes provided by the editors help much (though more expansive explication would admittedly have required a great deal of precious space). In addition to being obscure, many of these letters focus on details of little concern to anyone but students either of the period in question or of the life and career of Henry Adams. Finally, there is the problem of Adams's personality. There are very few people whose company would not become something of a strain after two thousand pages of letters, and Henry Adams is clearly not among them. Indeed, it is a tribute to his gifts as a writer that one can tolerate his tiresome affectations and poses, not to mention his nihilistic attitudes, even for a few hundred pages; but two thousand make an inhuman demand.

In saying all this, I do not mean to suggest that there is nothing of interest in Adams's letters, or that they are all impenetrable. Actually, to anyone who knows Adams only through the *Education*—which nowadays includes most of the people who know Adams at all—the letters he wrote in his youth are bound to come as a pleasant surprise. The author of *The Education of Henry Adams* was a disappointed man in his sixties, placing his great intellectual and literary powers entirely at the disposal of his bitterness. But the Henry Adams we encounter in the first volume of these letters was an exuberantly ambitious young man in his twenties, sufficiently sure of himself to think that the letters he was writing "might still be read and quoted as a memorial of manners and habits" a century or two later "when everything else about us is forgotten."

At the same time he was full of self-doubt and uncertainty about his future. Should he devote himself to the law or to politics or to literature? And whatever he might choose to do, was he good enough to uphold the Adams heritage and maintain the luster of the Adams name? Both his great-grandfather John Adams and his grandfather John Quincy Adams had, of course, been presidents of the United States, and it seemed entirely possible that his own father, Charles Francis Adams, might eventually follow them into the White House. The young Henry, as the third of Charles Francis's sons, felt crowded out of politics by his father and his older brothers (or so he said); as for the law, which upon graduating from Harvard he had gone to Germany to study, he soon decided that it was not for him, while he found himself attracted more and more by the idea of a literary career. "I read Gibbon," he informed his older brother Charles Francis Adams, Jr. (who had the highest regard for him). "Do you know, after long argument and reflexion I feel much as if perhaps some day I too might come to anchor like that. Our house needs a historian in this generation and I feel

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strongly tempted by the quiet and sunny prospect, while my ambition for political life dwindles as I get older" (this, at the age of twenty-two).

After his student year in Europe, during which Charles saw to the publication of some of his letters in a Boston paper, Henry moved to Washington where his father was serving in the House of Representatives. Again he wrote regularly to Charles in Boston, reporting in great detail on the intricate political maneuverings that preceded the outbreak of the Civil War. When the war finally came, Henry's father was appointed minister to England by the recently elected President Lincoln, and Henry went along as his private secretary. For the next seven years, he lived in London and now he reported to Charles and others on the intricate diplomatic maneuverings through which his father successfully prevented the British from openly siding with the Confederacy. With the example of Horace Walpole in mind, he also wrote a great many letters about the fashionable society of London and the country houses to which he had relatively easy access (while complaining that his status as an American aristocrat was not sufficiently appreciated by the British aristocrats among whom he moved).

These London letters, frankly written with an eye on posterity, have obviously succeeded in reaching their intended audience, but this does not mean that they succeeded in providing a vivid picture of the "manners and habits" of the time. Henry Adams had a powerful mind and he was a prose stylist of high distinction, but for all his relish of gossip he was no Walpole. Later, when he began writing narrative history, he demonstrated an ability to seize on the telling detail or the memorable anecdote, but, curiously, neither when writing letters nor when writing novels did he have command of that kind of eye. Often he went through the motions, describing balls and dinner parties, transcribing conversations, composing character sketches, and so on. Yet so lacking in spontaneity and so highly self-conscious were these exercises that for the most part they remained dead on the page. And there were occasions when he could hardly bring himself even to go through the motions: "Yesterday we had a pleasant dinner which the feminines will no doubt describe to you, at which Charles Dickens; John Forster, of 'Goldsmith' and the 'Statesman'; Louis Blanc, and other distinguished individuals, were present; and a very jolly dinner it was." So much for Adams as a chronicler of the life of his times.

In the second volume of this new edition of his letters, we follow Adams, now thirty, back to the United States, where he began publishing serious political essays on the corruptions and abuses of the Johnson and Grant administrations. This led to a joint appointment as editor of the *North American Review,* a quarterly journal that Adams proceeded to enlist in the cause of political reform, and as an assistant professor at Harvard, where he taught medieval history (a subject to which he would return later in life in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*). But during the seven years he spent at Harvard he also began thinking about and working on what would soon become his main preoccupation: the early history of his own country. It was during this period too that he met and married Marian Hooper (known as Clover).

In 1877 Adams left Cambridge for Washington, where his work as a historian began in earnest. Within an extraordinarily short time, he produced a scholarly biography of Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin; a more popular book about John Randolph, the great Congressional prophet of Southern secession; yet another about Aaron Burr (which was never published and has been lost); and two anonymously published novels, *Democracy* and *Esther.* At the same time, he worked steadily on his massive *History,* which involved tracking down and copying vast quantities of papers and documents from archives both in the United States and Europe.

His life in Washington, punctuated by much foreign travel, was as rich as it was

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productive. He was happily married to a woman who was considered by no less a judge than Henry James "one of the two most interesting women in America." He was surrounded by a loving circle of intimate friends like John Hay, the biographer of Lincoln and a future Secretary of State. He occupied a place at the very center of Washington society.

Not surprisingly, the letters Adams wrote during this, the most productive and happiest period of his life, were full of ebullience, optimism, and more good cheer than most readers of the *Education* would suspect him capable of. They were also considerably less self-conscious than his earlier letters and were largely addressed to the recipient rather than to posterity through the recipient. But like those earlier letters, they were crammed with details about current political activity of no great interest today—and also, incidentally, with even more tedious detail concerning his financial affairs, his shopping expeditions while traveling, and the building of a new house on Lafayette Square right across from the White House. Then, only days before moving into that house, "Clover" Adams, who had been in a depression since the recent death of her father, suddenly committed suicide. This great blow had a temporarily softening effect on Adams:

> During the last two weeks I have learned something more about life than I knew before, but the saddest discovery of all was that I did not stand alone in my extremity of suffering. The whole of society seemed to groan with the same anguish. My table was instantly covered with messages from men and women whose own hearts were still aching with the same wounds, and who received me, with a new burst of their own sorrow, into their sad fraternity. My pain seemed lost in the immensity of human distress; and all these people were still carrying on their daily lives, as I must do.

Though from that moment forward he never stopped speaking of himself as a dead man undergoing a posthumous existence, Adams remained true to this resolution to carry on. He moved into his new house, he continued working on his *History,* and he went on a series of long journeys, first to Japan and then to the South Seas. Writing mainly to Elizabeth Cameron, a young married beauty with whom he carried on a (probably Platonic) affair for the rest of his life, Adams produced what amounted to a book on Samoa and Tahiti. But except perhaps for a brilliantly memorable series of portraits of Robert Louis Stevenson, these letters, making up the heart of Volume III, no more justify the claim that Adams was one of the great letter-writers in the English language than the earlier volumes do.

Nor do they justify another claim often made on behalf of Adams: that the great bitterness which increasingly became his most salient quality was caused in some sense by his wife's suicide. Adams certainly loved his wife, and he was undoubtedly crushed by her horrible death. But the liveliness and vitality of the letters he wrote to Elizabeth Cameron so shortly afterward—not to mention his great passion for her—suggest that he recovered much more quickly and fully than he had expected or than some who have taken his extravagant rhetoric at face value believe.

Was it then America that made Henry Adams bitter? Here after all was a man descended from the most distinguished political family in American history and richly endowed in his own right; yet so bad had things evidently become in the America of his day that he could find no proper role to play in its political life. This was the view Adams himself took of his own case in the *Education,* and the last time I looked closely at him and his work, which was about twenty-five years ago, I saw no reason to question it. For in expressing his disgust with what had been happening to America in the decades after the Civil War, Adams was entirely at one with the standard diagnosis of the "Gilded Age," when (according to what *my* education had taught me to believe) the whole country was being ruined

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by reckless commercialism and political corruption. Moreover, in saying that he was "heavily handicapped . . . in running for such stakes as the century had to offer," he was proclaiming his membership in the community of those whose very virtues of mind and character had unfitted them for success in the kind of society America had become. This was the society that—or so almost every twentieth-century literary critic since the days of Van Wyck Brooks had been arguing—stifled the genius of Mark Twain and drove Henry James into exile, while exalting "robber barons" like Jay Gould and John D. Rockefeller and the venal politicians whom they bought and sold at will. In such a society there was no place for a patrician idealist like Henry Adams.

Nor was Adams an isolated case. According to Edmund Wilson, himself a product of the patriciate:

> The period after the Civil War—both banal in a bourgeois way and fantastic with gigantic fortunes—was a difficult one for Americans brought up in the old tradition . . . . They had been educated at Exeter and Andover and at eighteenth-century Princeton, and had afterwards been trained, like their fathers, for what had once been called the learned professions; but they had then had to deal with a world in which this kind of education and the kind of ideals it served no longer really counted for much.

In speaking here of his father's generation, Wilson was echoing the ideas and even the language of Adams's *Education*. To be sure, Wilson found Adams a much less sympathetic victim than John Jay Chapman, another patrician writer of the same generation who (in Wilson's words) inflicted "permanent psychological damage" on himself "by beating his head against the gilt of the Gilded Age." (Chapman, incidentally, was no great admirer of Adams either—"the piping Adams as he sits on his raft in the sunset and combs his golden hair with a golden toothpick.") But the qualities Wilson disliked in Adams—his coldness and his malice—were, as Wilson's friend Scott Fitzgerald might have said, merely personal. Adams remained for Wilson a victim of the politics of the period. And for many others, he became, and has remained to this day, one of the main counts in an indictment of America as a country entirely given over to commercialism, philistinism, and corruption.

Having absorbed and accepted this general view for so long, I was taken aback by what I found when I began reading Adams again a few months ago. To start with, what struck me this time more forcibly than before was how bitter Adams was from his earliest days. Even as a high-spirited young man—and long before the world could have given him any cause—he suffered from what he himself would later call "moral dyspepsia." He had a decidedly sour attitude toward most of the people he met while a student in Germany and then when working for his father in London; he disliked most of the European capitals he visited, including Berlin, Paris, and Rome (which he would later adore); and even in his twenties and thirties, his natural vitality was already subject to corrosion by frequent bouts of anxiety and self-pity.

The second thing that struck me in returning to Adams was the ferocity of his ambition. What he wanted above all else was success, and he wanted it in all the usual forms: power, money, status, acclaim. As an Adams, he was expected to seek power—not, to be sure, for its own sake but in order to serve some higher good. Yet he never had a very clear sense of what this higher good might be. At first, he believed in civil-service reform, in the gold standard, in laissez-faire, and in free trade. Later he changed his mind about gold and several other issues. But reading his letters and his books, one comes away with the strong feeling that particular issues were beside the point; Adams simply assumed that the higher good would be served if he and people like him were running the country. "We want a national set of young men like ourselves or better," he wrote from London to Charles, "to start

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new influences not only in politics, but in literature, in law, in society, and throughout the whole social organism of the country—a national school of our own generation...."

Adams himself never held public office, high or low, and according to R. P. Blackmur, his "failure in American political society" was not due to any incapacity of his own but rather to "society's inability to make use of him: its inability to furnish a free field for intelligent political action." In the past, there had been such a field but America was now "bound for quick success . . . . It cared nothing for political mastery, and commonly refused to admit it had a purpose beyond the aggregation of force in the form of wealth."

Now, as it happens, Henry Adams himself, as his letters clearly showed, was not above dreaming of quick success. Nor could any reader of these letters, with their incessant harping on his investments and those of his family and friends, think that he was indifferent to the accumulation of wealth. George Santayana, for one, came away from a visit to Adams with the opposite impression:

> "So you are trying to teach philosophy at Harvard," Mr. Adams said . . . . "I once tried to teach history there, but it can't be done. It isn't really possible to teach anything." This . . . was not encouraging. Still . . . Mr. Adams's house . . . [was] . . . luxurious. I got the impression that, if most things were illusions, having money and spending money were great realities.

Be that as it may, there is plenty of reason for dismissing the idea that Adams's failure to realize his political ambitions proved that American society had become too crass and too fixated on wealth to make use of its best bred, best educated, and most talented young men. For one thing, a good many other young men with backgrounds similar to Adams's, and with exactly the same education that supposedly incapacitated him, did manage to enter American political life in his time and to make an enormous mark. One of them was Henry Cabot Lodge—the descendant of a family almost as eminent as the Adamses, a former student of Henry Adams himself at Harvard and his junior colleague on the *North American Review,* a distinguished author, and in general a person of great intellectual gifts—who became perhaps the most important senator of the age. Another was Theodore Roosevelt, who, like Adams, came of patrician stock and was also an author of no small accomplishment (among many other books he wrote a four-volume history, *The Winning of the West*). And if Lodge and Roosevelt succeeded in electoral politics, Oliver Wendell Holmes (another Harvard friend and colleague) was appointed to the Supreme Court, while John Hay (Adams's closest friend) was able to become Secretary of State.

The careers of men like these obviously demonstrate that Adams was incapacitated not by his education, his background, or his intellect, but by his lack of the qualities necessary to political success in a democracy—most especially the willingness to subject himself to the judgment and the control of ordinary people. For all their high-mindedness and their fears of "King Demos," John Adams and John Quincy Adams had this willingness, and their descendant Henry Adams did not. So fastidious was he that he refused to associate with anyone outside the smallest and most select of circles, whether social or intellectual. ("Hang it," says a character Henry James modeled on Adams, "let us be vulgar and have some fun—let us invite the President," while John Jay Chapman once commented that Adams was a member of "the Secret Society of the Only Intellectuals in America.") As if this were not enough, Adams was so sensitive to criticism that he could hardly bear to publish his books for fear that they would be exposed to the judgment of an ignorant tribe of reviewers. The idea that such a man could run for office in any democratic society at any time, or even do the demeaning things that are usually required to put oneself in the way of appointive office, is simply ridiculous.

This, at any rate, is what several of his

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own friends thought. "If the country had put him on a pedestal," Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked to Owen Wister, "I think Henry Adams with his gifts could have rendered distinguished public service." When Wister asked, "What was the matter with Henry Adams?," Holmes replied, "He wanted it handed to him on a silver platter." And in an unmistakable allusion to Adams in the course of a comment about John Hay, Theodore Roosevelt observed that Hay's "temptation was to associate as far as possible only with men of refined and cultivated tastes, who lived apart from the world of affairs, and who, if Americans, were wholly lacking in robustness of fibre."

Sensing all this about himself, Adams never even tried to make a political career. But withdrawing from politics did not mean giving up on ambition. On the contrary, telling himself that political power was "the most barren of all forms of success," while literature offered "higher prizes than politics," he decided to concentrate on the writing of history. In this area too his ambition knew no bounds. If he could not be worthy of the family name by getting into the White House, he would travel to glory by an even better route: he would become the successor of Gibbon and the American Macaulay.

In dreaming this dream of greatness, at least, Adams was reaching for something that he had both the character and the endowment to achieve. He was a brilliant writer; he was a patient, scrupulous, and indefatigable scholar; and his talent for observing the world of affairs was as keen as his ability to live in it was poor (for, as Henry James remarked of the character based on Adams, though he might not have been in politics, "politics were much in him").

Ten years he spent on his *History,* and when the nine volumes were finally completed and published, the results came as a hideous disappointment. The reviews were on the whole respectful, but no one acclaimed him as the new Gibbon or the Macaulay of America. And whereas both Gibbon and Macaulay had sold in the tens of thousands, Adams's sales (about which he cared desperately) were very modest.

Here then was a double disappointment. Having turned to literature with an uneasy conscience—for he never could rid himself of the feeling that as an Adams he was supposed to be in politics—but having persuaded himself that literary success was after all better, he failed to achieve even that, at least in his own eyes. It was bad enough that America had frustrated his political ambitions, but it was worse still that it refused to make even his literary dreams come true. And so Adams's alienation was now complete—so much so that William Phillips, the editor of *Partisan Review,* for whom the condition of alienation was the true mark of the American intellectual, could by 1941 see in him "a symbol of our entire culture."

That Adams was alienated from the America of his day is certainly true, but it has been too easily assumed that the estrangement was entirely the result—or rather the fault—of the changes that came over the country in the Gilded Age. Quite apart from the issue of whether Adams would have been any more at home in the society of his ancestors, there is also a question to be raised about the putative decline of America from their time to his own. In this connection it is interesting to note that, as we learn from Adams himself, the very same charges had been made against the supposedly pure precapitalist America of 1800 as were now being made against the America of the Gilded Age. In "The United States in 1800," the long prologue to his *History,* Adams wrote:

> In the foreigner's range of observation, love of money was the most conspicuous and most common trait of American character . . . . No foreigner of that day—neither poet, painter, nor philosopher—could detect in American life anything higher than vulgarity . . . . Englishmen especially indulged in unbounded invective against the sordid character of American society . . . . Contemporary critics could

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> see neither generosity, economy, honor, nor ideas of any kind in the American breast . . . . [Even Wordsworth] could do no better, when he stood in the face of American democracy, than "keep the secret of a poignant scorn."

Dismissing the idea that the critics might have been right, Adams insisted that their contempt for America showed nothing more than an astonishing lack of imagination. "Wordsworth might have convinced himself by a moment's thought that no country could act on the imagination as America acted upon the instincts of the ignorant and poor, without some quality that deserved better treatment than poignant scorn." Indeed, though the philosophers and the poets could see only rapacity and vulgarity in America, "the poorest peasant in Europe" could discern "the dim outline of a mountain-summit across the ocean, rising high above the mist and mud of American democracy." Adams went even further:

> . . . the hard, practical, money-getting American democrat, who had neither generosity nor honor nor imagination, and who inhabited cold shades where fancy sickened and where genius died, was in truth living in a world of dream, and acting a drama more instinct with poetry than all the avatars of the East, walking in gardens of emerald and rubies, in ambition already ruling the world and guiding Nature with a kinder and wiser hand than had ever yet been felt in human history.

Every word of this could be applied with equal, perhaps even greater, force to much of what was written by Adams himself and so many others about the materialism, corruption, and philistinism of America in the Gilded Age, when new waves of immigrant masses were pouring into the country, encouraged by a new breed of "American speculator" inviting them (as Adams said their forebears of 1800 had also done) to "Come and share our limitless riches! Come and help us bring to light these unimaginable stores of wealth and power!"

In short, in speaking of the America of 1880, Adams sounded exactly like the foreign critics he had derided for their blindness to the poetry of the America of 1800, even though most of the changes which had taken place during those eighty years (including the abolition of slavery) had, if anything, been for the better. Nor was Adams blind only to the political and economic "poetry" of his own time; he was also dead to its poetry in the more literal sense. For example, he rarely read and had no appreciation for the novels of his lifelong friend Henry James. "There is no thought in America," he said at a time when William James and John Dewey, among others, were active. Nor did he have any interest in contemporary American painters like Eakins and Whistler (or for that matter in the French Impressionists, and he positively hated such European writers of the day as Hardy, Ibsen, and Zola).

This alienation from the life of his own time found negative expression in increasingly violent private outbursts and in various "scientific" theories according to which the whole world was in a state of inexorable decline; "the huge eternal cataclysm" was surely coming within fifty years and his only fear was that he would not live to see it. These apocalyptic yearnings were, moreover, invariably accompanied by anti-Semitic outbursts so frenzied that they scandalized even some of his friends. During the Dreyfus Affair, John Hay (no great philo-Semite himself) said that Adams "now believes the earthquake at Krakatoa was the work of Zola and when he saw Vesuvius reddening the midnight air he searched the horizon to find a Jew stoking the fire." But Hay's description, with all its humorous extravagance, caught only the obsessiveness of Adams's hatred of Jews, not the virulence that came out in such remarks as: "The Jew has got into the soul. I see him—or her—now everywhere, and wherever he—or she—goes, there must remain a taint in the blood forever." Or again: "I tell you Rome was a blessed garden of paradise beside the rotten, unsexed, swindling, lying Jews, represented by Pier-

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pont Morgan and the gang who have been manipulating the country for the last few years." Or again: "I am myself more than ever at odds with my time. I detest it and everything that belongs to it, and live only in the wish to see the end of it, with all its infernal Jewry . . . . I want to go to India, and be a Brahmin, and worship a monkey."

Instead of going to India, however, Adams went to the South Seas to romanticize the primitive culture of Samoa and Tahiti and to lament its impending ruination by Western influence. And instead of becoming a Brahmin and worshipping a monkey, he became (in imagination at least) a Christian of the thirteenth century and worshipped the Virgin Mary. In *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres,* Adams's nihilism gave way for the moment to reverence, as a lyrical talent for celebration which had been dormant since the completion of his *History* was reawakened by the cathedrals, the poetry, and the philosophy of medieval France. But the old Adams, so to speak, soon returned to write the *Education,* and here his nihilism, refined into a prose of subtly poisonous elegance and density, informed almost every word. For if the thirteenth century represented civilization at its height and called for reverence, the twentieth century was the culmination of a long process of degradation and degeneration to which the only sensible response was vindictive raillery. As to this invidious contrast, perhaps the best comment was made by Yvor Winters in his long essay on Adams:

> Adams arrived at his view of the middle ages by concentrating on a few great products of literature, thought, and architecture; ignoring everything else, he asserted that these were the thirteenth century. He arrived at his view of the twentieth century by reversing the process. He thus deduced that the world was deteriorating, and so found a justification for his own state of mind.

What then remains of Adams today? Despite the best efforts of his epigones and his apologists, the *Education* is still the only one of Adams's books that is generally regarded as an indispensable classic. Some critics, Winters among them, consider the *History* a great work, but there is no use pretending that anyone other than a specialist in the period is ever going to read nine volumes covering only seventeen years of early American history. On the other hand, the prologue and epilogue, which together make up a manageable book, can still be read with great pleasure and profit. The same cannot be said of the biographies of Gallatin and Randolph; for the general reader, they are at best curiosities, while of the perfunctory little book Adams produced on the poet George Cabot Lodge (the last thing he ever wrote) not even that much can be said. Unlike Winters, I find much that is beautiful and illuminating in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres,* but so technical and so hermetic is it, especially in the long sections on architecture, that only someone with a special reason for doing so is likely to pick it up or to stay with it until the end (even Edmund Wilson, who read everything, could never bring himself to read it). As for Adams's novels, *Democracy* (an exposé of the corruptions of Washington in the era of Grant and Hayes) is a mildly interesting document, but it has no value as a work of art, and *Esther* (which deals in the standard terms of the period with the conflict between science and religion) is an embarrassingly poor performance altogether.

We come back, then, to the *Education,* which many profess to regard as a great work, but which to me now seems repellent in its hostility, its self-pity, and what Wilson called its "stealthy and elusive malice." It is also so arch and elliptical that I wonder how many of its admirers have been able to follow it any better than William James did. It was, James complained, "a hodge-podge of world fact, private fact, philosophy, irony," and he told Adams that "A great deal of the later diplomatic history is dealt with so much by hint and implication that to an ignoramus like W. J. it reads obscurely."

In the early 1950s, when the reputation of

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Adams had fallen in proportion to the new (and short-lived) enthusiasm among literary intellectuals for "our country and our culture," Lionel Trilling cautioned against reading "Adams permanently out of our intellectual life." Trilling acknowledged that there was much to be said against Adams—and he himself said it all—but there were moments when we needed him:

> We are at one with Adams whenever our sense of the American loneliness and isolation becomes especially strong, whenever we feel that our culture belongs to everyone except ourselves and our friends, whenever we believe that our talents and our devotion are not being sufficiently used.

This is an acute diagnosis of Adams's appeal, but there is another way of putting the same point. Thus one can say that Adams has been kept alive as an incitement to and a justification of the hunger of the American intellectual class for the power, and especially the political power, that he himself, for all that he denigrated it, could never stop wanting and envying. The life of the mind was never enough for Adams, and if he is an exemplary figure, what he exemplifies is the self-hatred so many American writers and thinkers have felt over being "mere" intellectuals, and the self-pity they have experienced over what they have taken to be their own powerlessness.

The great irony is that the case of Adams—who remains a force when the names of Rutherford B. Hayes or Chester Arthur are scarcely even remembered—demonstrates how much more powerful intellectuals can be in the long run than even the most successful of politicians. This does not, however, mean that Adams is a force for good. On the contrary, in encouraging a bigoted contempt for this country and in subtly denigrating and devaluing the life of the mind, he has exerted so malignant an influence that, unlike Trilling, I see little of value that would be lost by allowing him to slip into the obscurity he so often boasted of wishing to achieve.

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Giacometti and Picasso: chronicle of a friendship

by James Lord

In the month of May, 1932, the first one-man show of sculptures by Alberto Giacometti took place at the Galérie Pierre Colle in Paris. It was not, however, the introduction of an unknown artist. Giacometti was a member of the Surrealist group, a favorite of André Breton, and his work had appeared in more than a dozen exhibitions along with other artists during the previous few years. So the Pierre Colle exhibition came as public consecration of a talent already recognized and praised. On the opening day, one of the first to arrive was Pablo Picasso, alert as ever to the latest artistic innovations and eager to turn them to advantage in his own work when possible. Giacometti and Picasso were acquainted but not yet friends. The Spanish painter was twenty years older than the Swiss sculptor, and already internationally known, though not yet by any means world famous. Neither man was given to impulsive commitments of friendship or effusions of personal feeling. Both were aware that the other was not someone to be taken lightly, hence it was natural that their approach to one another should be circumspect.

The Giacometti exhibition was not a commercial triumph, but it was a considerable *succès d'estime.* The most influential journal devoted to contemporary art at that time was *Cahiers d'Art,* edited in Paris by Christian Zervos, a great promoter of Picasso's renown and assiduous compiler of his colossal catalogue raisonné. Writing of Giacometti's recent work, Zervos had this, in part, to say: "Giacometti is the first young sculptor to profit extensively from the example of his elders (Brancusi, Laurens, Lipchitz). The newness of his work, as we have seen, lies in its very personal expressiveness, in its taste for adventure, in the spiritual curiosity of the artist and above all in the primordial power which always triumphs. Giacometti is at present the only young sculptor whose works confirm and expand new directions in sculpture." Half a century's hindsight shows us how extraordinarily clairvoyant was Zervos's discernment. It was shared by Picasso, who already had an important body of sculpture behind him and was at that very time busily making a lot more at his château in the country.

Politics played an important part in the doings of the Surrealist group. All those excitable young men sincerely believed that their activities would bring about a vital regeneration of human consciousness and entirely transform the structure of society. Revolution, in a word, was their aim. Not merely spiritual or intellectual upheaval, either, but the real thing. That may seem sophomoric today, but at the time, when the last glimmer of the Enlightenment was still faintly visible in the western sky, it made a kind of desperate sense. The Surrealists, however, were not the only ones seeking revolution. The Communists were after it, too. But they had no notion of attaining their objective by creating works of art, writ-

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ing poetry or proclaiming the supremacy of dreams. Political power was what they wanted. Still, they were shrewd enough to see that so much spiritual dynamism and intellectual prestige might be nicely turned to advantage. Thus the conflict between Communists and Surrealists was joined. It would be bitter and prolonged, made especially so through the repudiation of Surrealism by one of its original and most brilliant proponents, Louis Aragon. When Aragon left the Surrealist group, Giacometti went with him, though he stopped short of joining the Communist Party. He held passionate political convictions, but it was to their passion rather than to their practical application that he addressed himself. He never belonged to any political party, never cast a ballot in his life, but by nature identified himself with those who were oppressed by the inequity of human circumstances. His means of showing that he did so was the one most obvious. He said, "I think that the best way for an artist to be a revolutionary is to do his work as well as possible." Giacometti's apostasy from the Surrealist group was brief. Leaving Aragon to the shifty terrain of politics, he went back to his studio and tested his integrity by making sculpture.

Picasso, meanwhile, trod very warily on the surface of political territory, concerned to do his work, too, as well as possible while furthering his sensationally successful career. To galvanize both political feelings and creative energies in one titanic cultural outburst it would take a tour de force of technological atrocity visited upon the painter's homeland. That event was still five years in the future at the time of Giacometti's first exhibition. Turmoil, though, was plentiful in Picasso's private life. Conflict with his wife, mistresses, and children, both legitimate and illegitimate, brought ample opportunity to contemplate the sufferings of others. And yet throughout most of this period the artist, whose work is as overtly autobiographical as that of any man who ever lived, was pleased to depict himself as an Olympian figure serenely surveying the wonders of his own creativity. To see himself as such a figure, and to be pleased by it, had, indeed, become increasingly easy for Picasso as his fame and fortune increased. Success was his element and he soared in it with superhuman facility. Giacometti, on the other hand, was very soon to prove his integrity by leaving the Surrealist group—for aesthetic, not political, reasons—and entering upon a laborious lonely period lasting nearly fifteen years, during which he made of failure the touchstone of his aspirations. This called for character of an heroic dimension, presumptuous, perhaps, in its very humility, and it must be said that genius does not necessarily confer great character.

Picasso thrived on the celebrity that went with success, enjoyed being courted by rich aristocrats, poets, men of state and women of fashion. "They recharge my batteries," he said. It amused him to see how their admiration could be used to manipulate them. The effects were frequently dramatic, and he knew it. "Sometimes," he once remarked, "even my best friends don't get past the box office." Giacometti was not amused by the show of Picasso's power to make people fawn. At the opening of a Picasso exhibition in the mid-1930s the sculptor pointedly neglected to compliment the painter, observing later, "So he sees that everyone is not on his knees before him." That any man should ever be on his knees before another was a prospect that Giacometti would have viewed with abhorrence.

On April 26, 1937, the Spanish town of Guernica was destroyed by German and Italian planes flying for the fascist forces of General Franco. A few days later Picasso began making the sketches that would bring forth in just five weeks the enormous canvas memorializing the martyrdom of the defenseless town. While working on it he made a public declaration of solidarity with the Republican forces, saying, among other things, "My whole life as an artist has been nothing more than a continuous struggle against reaction and the death of art." In fact, the struggle was far deeper, and more terrible, than that.

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By the spring of 1937 Giacometti and Picasso had become friendly enough so that the sculptor was one of the few regularly welcomed in the studio of the rue des Grands-Augustins to observe the evolution of the huge painting. That the close friendship between the two artists dates from this time seems appropriate. Picasso's work and life reached their zenith during this period. Judgments may vary as to the relative importance of his large compositions, but none can contest that after *Guernica* he never painted another that came close to it in power or originality. It was executed almost exactly at the midpoint of his career; everything that came before it may be seen as gradually building toward it, everything that came after as a gradual decline. By its formal inventiveness, its aesthetic dynamism, its moral and cultural implications, its dramatic imagery and symbolism, its overpowering emotion, and by its very size, this one work seems like no other to have engaged Picasso's whole being as an artist, as a Spaniard, and as a mortal man.

At the same time, or shortly thereafter, Giacometti had begun to make the minuscule figurines which eventually led to the tall, attenuated, hieratic figures that became famous two decades later. Eternally dissatisfied, however, he destroyed almost everything he made, as if the perfect dimension he sought were, indeed, a vision of perfection, hence unattainable. But Picasso was quick to perceive the validity and value of the sculptor's efforts and to appreciate their intellectual and spiritual scope. Although the artistic ambitions, not to mention the personalities, of the two men were profoundly different, almost in opposition, they were united by the mutual recognition of genius as well as by the shared self-doubt and the fear of impotence that haunt every artist. Giacometti was one of the very few never overawed by Picasso, because the essential condition of his respect for others forbade the notion that any person should by virtue of no matter what attainment be the object of special consideration. Picasso, however, in his life as well as his art, was protean and polymorphous, different things to different people, and with Giacometti he assumed an almost filial attitude, though he was himself old enough to be the father. Friends observed that he was impressed by the sculptor as by very few persons, paid close attention to what he said, and deferred to his judgment. Always quick to seize upon the inventiveness of others and turn it to his own account, he adopted many of Giacometti's brilliant observations, repeating them as if they were his own. There was no other artist save Matisse whom he sought out so readily or talked to so willingly about art, explaining his intentions and trying to understand those of another. He did more. He asked Giacometti to criticize whatever sculpture he happened to be doing at the moment, and when the criticism had been given he often altered his work in accord with it. Giacometti was able to express his aesthetic convictions with an authority detached from personal feelings because he was the first to point out the inconclusiveness of his own work and to suggest that a contrary point of view might be more convincing.

Picasso was neither so modest nor so candid. He accepted Giacometti's criticisms but at the same time resented having done so, and the perverse side of his nature—always powerful—led him to make fun of the sculptor behind his back. Though he understood very well why the tiny figurines which his friend sometimes carried about with him in large matchboxes were momentous innovations in the history of sculpture, he could not resist insinuating that their importance, after all, might be in proportion to their size. Making light of the sculptor's anxiety and frustration, he said, "Alberto tries to make us regret the works he hasn't done."

If such sarcasms had ever got back to Giacometti, he would have been quick to say that there might be something to them. Picasso's penchant for sardonic mockery, however, also expressed itself in ways regarded by the sculptor with less indulgence. He was highly critical, for example, of the painter's parental behavior, which he de-

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nounced as scandalous. Picasso's eldest child, a boy called Paulo, was a problem, and chiefly because his father could not accept the idea that he had sired an exceptionally commonplace son. He wanted Paulo to be a Picasso not only in name but in effect. It was no good. But the lad was subjected to obscure compulsions, anyway. On one occasion his father took him by the hand and led him up and down the Champs-Elysées for hours while he begged the passersby for money. The gesture was a fine Picassian illustration of the artificial status offered by a materialistic society to an artistic genius, especially one who happens to be the richest artist of all time. But it meant something else to a lonely boy who lived at home in luxury and wanted only to remain there in peace, playing with his toy cars. Picasso père did not believe in spoiling his offspring. Paulo had little spending money, went poorly dressed, and later got into trouble with the police. His father got him out of it. Giacometti's censure was unsparing, and he said that Picasso, not Paulo, was the one who merited imprisonment.

When the Second World War came, both Giacometti and Picasso remained in Paris, at least at first. Both being citizens of neutral foreign countries, they had nothing personally to fear from the Nazis. The same was not true of everyone. Picasso's principal dealer and staunchest and longest-suffering defender was a German Jew named Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. He went into hiding at the start of the Occupation. Picasso's relations with Kahnweiler—like his relations with everybody, including, one may assume, himself—were highly ambivalent. He much appreciated what the dealer had done for him but bitterly resented what he had in the process done for himself. And on one occasion during the Occupation he gave voice in Giacometti's presence to a peevish remark making a joke of the possibility that Kahnweiler might fall into the hands of the Gestapo. The full weight of this remark fortunately never came to bear in Kahnweiler's case, but it may be valid to note in passing that after the arrest of Max Jacob, a Jewish poet and boon companion of Picasso's youth, appeals to the painter to intercede were unavailing, and Jacob died in the hands of the Nazis. Giacometti was outraged by Picasso's frivolity; he found it both unforgivable and unforgettable, especially coming from one who was himself diligent to a fault about avoiding danger. He knew enough about death—and expected that Picasso should have known as much—to know that *it* offers extenuating circumstances to nobody.

On the thirty-first of December, 1941, Giacometti left Paris for Geneva, where he meant to spend a few months with his mother. Once there, however, he was compelled by wartime travel restrictions to remain, and he spent three and a half years in the dour Calvinist city, most of them working in a tiny hotel room on the tiny figurines which continued to defy his efforts to attain the ideal dimension. "If only I could make one sufficiently tiny," he said, "then it could exist in any dimension and would assume the aspect of a goddess." It would do so in time, but not yet. During the war years Giacometti toiled in arduous solitude, and he later said that he had spent much of his time meditating on the work and example of Cézanne. The two artists had much in common. Both labored in the implacable context of failure, and both had the strength of character to accept it as the guiding principle of achievement. In the meantime, Giacometti's outlook regarding other matters of perspective had undergone significant change. In the early Thirties it had been all very well to believe in the utopian prospects so cannily contrived by Communist apologists. A decade later, however, no lucid observer could see things in the same light. The purge trials, tales of Stalinist terror, and details of Soviet intervention during the Spanish civil war put a very different face onto the idealistic image of a more credulous day. More than ever Giacometti felt that his best effort to redress the wrongs of human society should be expended on his work. When a group of Communist intellec-

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tuals invited him to attend a meeting in Basel, he said, "Everything that I am, and want to be, and care about, is considered decadent by the Communists. Why should I take a stand that eliminates myself?" He never did. For that matter, he never took a stand that eliminated anyone.

Picasso was less clear in his mind about ethical perspectives. Having managed to live throughout the war untroubled—even by the occasional visit of the Nazi admirer in uniform—the painter seems to have viewed the future after the end of hostilities with a strange misgiving and to have felt great need of partisan goodwill. An anti-fascist of long-proven conviction, he had still kept securely aloof from the active political fray. Now he got caught up in it. He was not a citizen of France, but in 1945 he became a member of the French Communist Party. The announcement created a stir, coinciding providentially with the opening of the first important postwar exhibition of his works, which also occasioned a ruckus. Picasso's fame—and prices—skyrocketed in the international orbit. Expert in the arts of personal mythology, he carefully avoided explaining why he had become a Communist. His motives were no doubt as complex as his paintings. Two of his close friends, Aragon and Eluard, were Party members, and their influence may have been critical. In the past, however, Picasso had always been a leader, often rebellious and defiant, but he allowed his newfound comrades to turn him to an account which tallied only too well with his reputation for unpredictable changes of style. Having acquired a new allegiance, Picasso also went about acquiring a new mistress. At sixty-four he wasn't getting any younger, and neither was Dora Maar, the *maîtresse en titre,* then thirty-eight. He determined to replace her with a girl of twenty-four named Françoise Gilot. Since nothing concerning Picasso could now seem to take place in becoming privacy, this change was accompanied by considerable public titillation.

Thus, the friend Giacometti found when he returned from Geneva in mid-September of 1945 was not quite the same man he had known before. But the two were happy to rediscover one another. The happier was probably Picasso, because he now found himself more and more exclusively surrounded by people whose admiration he craved but whose perspicacity he was too intelligent to trust. No uncertainty ever prevailed concerning the candor or acuity of Giacometti's judgments. Anxious to show him recent work, Picasso expressed relief when the younger artist assured him that it gave positive evidence of progress. For some time after his return from Geneva Giacometti was a frequent visitor to the rue des Grands-Augustins. When Picasso occasionally returned the visits, the two artists often went to a nearby café to talk, drink, or while away an hour giggling like schoolboys as they pored over the pornographic magazines Picasso sometimes brought with him. And presently the sculptor started work on a bust of his friend, executed from memory.

In January 1948 Pierre Matisse was preparing to exhibit at his gallery in New York a selection of more than thirty sculptures by Alberto Giacometti, including many of the most recent. Among the pieces potentially available for exhibition had been one of more than aesthetic note: the bust of Picasso. Matisse had wanted to show it. Picasso was the contemporary artist most exciting and controversial, especially in America, where the war had stimulated rather than stifled artistic activity, and the association of his name would have added prestige to one little known. That likelihood had occurred to Giacometti. "It would be very, very disagreeable for me," he informed Matisse, "if anyone should think (and there would be people to think it) that I had exhibited a bust of Picasso to make a kind of publicity for myself. In any case, that would ruin all my pleasure in the exhibition." So the bust was not shown, and the artist's pleasure in his exhibition, though he was not on hand to see it, presumably remained unimpaired. As for the bust, it eventually went the way of the friendship. The exhibi-

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tion was a momentous and impressive one, for nothing at all like it had ever been seen before. But it did not arouse great excitement. Pierre Matisse was always better at showing to advantage the private aspects of an artist's work than at promoting the public strategy of a career. Besides, the excited attention of the New York art world was concentrated at that precise moment on another exhibition.

The coincidence is intriguing. Giacometti's sense of propriety had made him refuse to exhibit a bust of Picasso. The exhibition then focusing all interest was the first in New York since the war of Picasso's recent paintings. Picasso was news. His works and personality fascinated even those who were outraged and scandalized. The papers were full of pro and con—political, ethical, pictorial—while talk of high prices intrigued both connoisseurs and philistines. No other artist of modern times had so seized upon the public press and imagination. Nor was that an accident. About Picasso's person and career there had from the first been an adumbration of legend, and now it had begun to assume the identity and activity of the artist himself. Giacometti's perspicacity in taking care to dissociate himself from this ambiguity was characteristic and astute. No Faustian aspirations or delusions ever distracted him from the task at hand.

During the summer of 1950, when it looked as though the conflict in Korea might turn into another world war, Picasso uneasily debated transferring family and funds to Switzerland. But his nerves were steadied before the end of the year. In October he attended a Congress for Peace organized in England by the Communist Party. In November he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. In January, 1951, he painted a good-sized picture entitled *Massacre in Korea.* A political statement intended to decry American intervention in that country, it was meant to depict the slaughter of innocent and defenseless civilians by inhuman men at arms, bringing to the cause of rightful compassion the prestige of great art. It is a far cry from the humanitarian grandeur and enraged creativity of *Guernica,* and by comparison seems but a weak bleat in the pandemonium of political propaganda. As a formal production it makes facile use of aesthetic devices long since done to death by the painter. That is its truest image of violence. Something had happened to Picasso. He was now a changed man, and artist. This was not the first time he had allowed himself to be manipulated, and his art to be used for political purposes. Posters of his so-called "Dove of Peace" had been plastered onto half the walls in Europe. Common sense might have warned that so conspicuous a display of principle could come home to roost one day. But Picasso had set out to soar above every storm, and his awe-inspiring flight could not be renegotiated in midair lest he be brought low like a common mortal. His comrades in high places, however, were not his equals in the sphere of art. He surrounded himself with mediocre sycophants and third-rate artists, none of whom could remind him that moments of major attainment were no longer at hand. Georges Braque, who had shared such moments forty years before, was heard to say, "Picasso used to be a great artist, but now he's only a genius." In 1953, when Stalin died, Aragon asked Picasso to make a commemorative portrait of the deceased dictator. He complied. The portrait was published, along with reams of ignominious lamentation, beneath a hortatory headline: "What We Owe to Stalin." But the Party regulars didn't like it, and Picasso was rudely rebuked for want of respect. The uproar must have sounded brazen to ears addicted to adulation, but the artist kept his peace. Some years later he painted for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization a vast, vacant but highly expensive work entitled—by the recipients—*The Fall of Icarus.*

Giacometti's visits to the rue des Grands-Augustins grew gradually less frequent, then stopped. Whereupon Picasso began appearing regularly, though always unexpectedly, at the sculptor's spartan lodgings in the rue Hippolyte-Maindron. His pre-

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ferred hour was noon, when Giacometti would just be wakening, having worked till dawn, and not yet prepared to face the day, much less a crafty, challenging visitor. Too shrewd to expect obsequiousness from the sculptor but too dependent on it to go without, Picasso seems to have come to Giacometti's studio to test his welcome in a place where, in fact, he must have known it was no longer valid. He had stopped laughing behind the younger man's back, and spoke of his efforts with sharp-eyed admiration, saying that they represented "a new spirit in sculpture." When he came to the rue Hippolyte-Maindron, however, the works he chose to admire were invariably the worst, the ones half-finished or recently destroyed, which he would praise with great gusto, crying, "The best thing you've ever done!" If Giacometti was annoyed, it can only have been by the artlessness of the ploy. Knowing Picasso, though, he would not have expected him to let bad enough alone.

One day when the two men were alone together in Giacometti's studio, Christian Zervos arrived unannounced, bringing with him an Italian collector named Frua de Angeli, whom he hoped to coax into buying some of the sculptor's work, that being a time when a sale still mattered to his livelihood, however frugal. The Greek editor at once thought to turn to advantage the presence of the world's most prestigious painter by having him express before a tentative purchaser his admiration for the works of their mutual friend. Pointing to one of the pieces in the studio, he enthusiastically expanded on its merits, then turned to Picasso and said, "Isn't that so?" Picasso kept mute. Zervos tried again. Again Picasso kept silent. A third and yet a fourth time the surprised but persistent editor attempted to extract a testimonial from the painter. To no avail. Picasso sat in stony silence, and his ostentatious refusal to accord his endorsement had the predictable effect. Zervos should have known better. Picasso, too.

In November 1951 Giacometti traveled with his wife Annette to the south of France for a visit with his friend Tériade, the other Greek editor, publisher of *Verve*. Giacometti was thrilled by the profusion of flowers so late in the year and wanted to sit all day long in the garden, drawing them. But there were calls to be made. They went to see Henri Matisse, now a semi-invalid, who received them in bed but ebulliently kept them for three hours' enthralling conversation. The next day they went to see Picasso, then living with his mistress and their two young children in a small, ugly house on a hillside set back from the coast. Picasso also received his callers in bed, as he was suffering from an attack of lumbago. The likeness with Matisse stopped short of his humor, which was bad. He picked Giacometti as the target for his petulance, saying, "You don't like me as much as you used to. You never come to see me anymore." Giacometti protested that the frequency of his visits was no fair gauge of friendship, since he did not live on the Riviera and traveled seldom. Picasso didn't care. If his friends were true, they came to see him. If not, what were they? Giacometti's presence in Picasso's bedroom at that moment being apparently irrelevant, the painter glared sullenly at his visitors, who were nonplussed. Giacometti made protestations. Picasso shrugged. An altercation ensued. It was the first open dispute ever to have occurred between the two artists. Both had violent tempers. The onlookers didn't know where to look.

Then Picasso performed one of those abrupt, unpredictable pirouettes of style so typical of him. He extended an invitation. What a lovely thing it would be, he said, if Giacometti came to stay with him there in Vallauris. That would be positive proof of friendship. A wonderful idea! So why not begin the visit at once? Tériade could go straight back to St. Jean and fetch the sculptor's suitcase. As for Annette, should her presence seem desirable, she could go to some hotel in Cannes, which was only a few miles away, or in Antibes, which was even closer. Giacometti's own lodging, though he may never have known it, would have been a dank room in the basement, where

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Picasso had nonetheless lodged the recently remarried Eluard and his ailing bride. The invitation, of course, was the crudest kind of taunt. Picasso gleefully pressed Giacometti to accept. Twenty years before, when they had first known each other, the sculptor had wanted to make sure Picasso saw that he was not on his knees. Picasso had seen, and had appreciated. But his craving to see people in that posture had not yielded to the years. It had only become more arrogant, and now he wanted a show of force to prove he could make Giacometti comply with a condescending caprice. It would not do. Though easy to anger, Giacometti also possessed immense reserves of self-control. He excused himself from accepting Picasso's invitation, and the visit lamely concluded with a poor pretense that amicable entente remained unaffected.

The friendship between the two artists ended on that day. They had had strong feelings for each other, however. These did not automatically go away when friendship went. Picasso was too prodigious a phenomenon for anyone who knew him to become indifferent to him. Giacometti did not stop talking about him, though what he said was severely critical. Long before the imbroglio at Vallauris, for example, after a visit to the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, he had had this to say: "Picasso altogether bad, completely beside the point from the beginning except for Cubist period and even that half misunderstood. French artist illustrator journalistic. Dubout[1] etc. but worse. Ugly. Old-fashioned vulgar, without sensitivity horrible in color or non-color. *Very bad painter once and for all.*"

That was Giacometti's judgment. It was final. The two still saw each other occasionally, however, when Picasso came to Paris. The sculptor tried to avoid the meetings and went out when he suspected that Picasso might be planning to find him in. But he was vulnerable, being without a telephone in a studio that opened directly onto the street. Something drove Picasso to seek out the other artist, something, perhaps, akin to a suspicion that what he sought was a virtue such as no man can procure from a mere mortal. If so, that was why Giacometti made of their rare encounters as good a semblance of the old-time camaraderie as he could. Some years later, when Picasso exhibited recent work at Kahnweiler's gallery, he politely attended the opening. A number of sculptures were shown. Picasso asked Giacometti's opinion of them. They were fine, all fine, Alberto said. Suspecting the reply to be a politesse, Picasso insisted, pressing particularly for appreciation of a painted bronze of a goat's head and a bottle with flowers. He had guessed shrewdly. Giacometti admitted that he didn't admire it. Picasso asked why. The sculptor tried to explain, while Picasso tenaciously defended his work. Creative ideals so divergent could never be reconciled, especially now that friendship had gone out of the equation, but the two artists talked hard, though courteously, for close to an hour. Then Giacometti pleaded urgent business elsewhere and left Picasso in the company of his acolytes. The one stray from the flock, though, being the most precious, who should the sculptor find on his doorstep when he reached home but Picasso. It is sad to think what the painter may have expected to gain by carrying his argument onto the home ground of the unbeliever. But he insisted. And it must have been hard to say no to a man whose insistence seemed to implicate him in the undoing of his own faith.

The two saw each other very seldom after this.

A gala celebration took place in the south of France in the mid-summer of 1964. It was the inauguration of the Marguerite and Aimé Maeght Foundation, a sizable museum built by the dealer who had promoted in Europe the careers of Giacometti, Miró, Braque, Calder, et al., and well stocked with works by every last one of them. Having gone south to supervise in person the placement of his "things," Giacometti re-

1 Albert Dubout (1906–1978) was a well-known illustrator and cartoonist of the Thirties, heavy-handed and vulgar.

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ceived a message from a former friend, old but unforgotten, one who had no part in the present festivities and wished for none, keeping a disdainful distance from the mise-en-scène of all glory save his own. Picasso sent word that he would be glad to receive a visit from Giacometti.

Aged and lonely, the perverse potentate had become the prisoner of abuses of his own power. The line at the "box office" was endless now, but few of those waiting interested the famous conjuror. In a tortuous way his life and work had come full circle. At the outset of his career he had liked to depict circus folk, equilibrists, and harlequins, and now his work once more abounded in circus imagery, while the world press was filled with photographs of the eighty-year-old artist in extravagant disguises, wearing masks, playing the clown. His private life had, in fact, become a public circus, described in detail in a then recent volume of memoirs by a former mistress, a publication Picasso had attempted to suppress by judicial proceedings. An artist who goes to court in an effort to uphold his good name must have sunk fairly low in self-esteem. The painter had grown peevish and fretful, having lived to see the deified creator behave like a very common mortal. Throughout his career he had returned continually to the theme of artist and model, but whereas once he had depicted the former as an imperturbable, majestic figure now he was shown to be grotesque and misshapen, a creature of ridicule and scorn. The vengeance of fate was the acuteness of Picasso's intelligence, which enabled him to see that he had failed to create his salvation. But that awareness brought to the capers and grimaces of the frantic old acrobat such little dignity as they had. It must have been a bitter perspective in which he considered his own carryings-on, having long ago observed, "It's not what the artist *does* that counts but what he *is*!"

What Giacometti was Picasso knew. He knew that Giacometti's sphere of responsible action had always been his studio, and that his contribution to the memorable discourse of the era had been made wholly by seeing, never by seeming. For his part, Giacometti never regarded Picasso with disdain or indifference. He regarded him with a variety of feelings as various, perhaps, as the painter's own efforts to seem inexhaustibly various. But in the end the efforts did not redeem the self-indulgence of their purpose, which was not to look at nature but to contemplate the artist's own prodigious output of art.

"He amazes me," Giacometti said. "He amazes me as a monster would, and I think he knows as well as we do that he's monstrous." But it was far too late in the day for memories of sincere esteem to do any good. Concerned to be kind, Giacometti hesitated over Picasso's message. He cannot have failed to understand the cruel irony of the old man's solitude. He had too keen a sense of honor, however, to be swayed by pity. He sent word that he could not make the visit, and he never saw Picasso again.

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Max Hayward: a portrait
by Patricia Blake

In a tribute to Max Hayward the Slavicist Victor Erlich wrote, "For some twenty-five years he labored tirelessly and selflessly to bring to the West the good tidings about the resurgence of the free Russian spirit." Only a most unusual sort of scholar would have set out on such a course, as Max did, before the death of Stalin in 1953. The free spirit of Russia had seemingly been extinguished, and literature, as Boris Pasternak remarked, had ceased to exist. Exile, suicide, disgrace, or death in the camps had overtaken the country's finest writers and poets. Those who had fortuitously survived, like Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova, worked in silence. Fiction, drama, poetry, and criticism were forums for exhortation. Such material could scarcely be regarded as a fit subject for literary scholarship in the West, though a few sociologically minded academics, mostly Americans, were attempting to study Soviet life "through the prism of Soviet literature," as the phrase went.

But Max was an unorthodox scholar. He had started out with a gift for learning a language, notably Russian, "fully, with perfect pitch, embracing its heartbeat," as his friend and collaborator Vera Dunham put it. Gradually, however, his erudition grew until it spanned several fields—Russian literature, history, politics, linguistics—though he could not be said to belong to any one. Through much of the 1950s he did the slogging work that was needed to uncover the changes that were taking place in Soviet cultural policy. He seemed to be the only person with stamina enough to read *Novy Mir* from cover to cover. No novel or play was too tiresome for him to scrutinize for traces of Aesopian language or for some smidgen of sincerity amidst all the old, familiar cant. As Leonard Schapiro has noted, Max was forever seeking signs of some "victory of civilized values over evil." In the 1960s, when talented, freethinking young poets and writers made their appearance in Russia, Max was among the first to recognize their liberating role.

Meanwhile, Max was periodically refreshed by translation. His taste was enlarged and his literary sensibility sharpened by the intimate relationship a great translator achieves with a work of art. He had the good fortune of encountering works that had broken out, wholly intact, from the shambles of Stalinism: Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago,* Akhmatova's *Requiem* and *Poem without a Hero,* Andrei Sinyavsky's *A Voice from the Chorus,* and Nadezhda Mandelstam's two-volume memoir, *Hope against Hope* and *Hope Abandoned.* The good fortune was also the authors'. "He did more than anyone I could name to make 'dissonant voices in Soviet literature' resound in clear and graceful English," Erlich wrote. For every book Max translated there were a dozen others by Russian writers that appeared as the result of his ministration. Max was also a fine writer who brought to his subject strong analytical powers, much erudition, seriousness of

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purpose, and reserves of saving wit and mischief.

In 1979, at the stark moment of Max's death, I wrote that he had acted as the custodian of Russia's literature until such time as it could be restored to its people. While it is surely true that he carried the burden of that mission, and passed it on to others, my formulation fell short of the forces that animated him. Consulting with many of his colleagues and friends and reflecting now upon his life, I believe that he was moved by a deeper underlay of feeling. His friend Leszek Kolakowski put it most simply: "Max was a profoundly pessimistic man whose sympathies lay with the common people." The Polish philosopher understood that Max deeply mistrusted all utopian ideologies, including Marxism. "He believed that ideologues and politicians should leave people alone. In spite of his Oxford education, he felt he belonged to the street; he was on the side of the poor." It was that strain of compassion for an abused people and their disinherited literature that gave his work its importance and his life its singular poignancy.

Max Hayward's Russian was flawless. He was so fluent that the Russians he met often refused to believe he was not a native speaker. When pressed to admit that he was an émigré, or at least the son of émigrés, he would sometimes sally forth with the information that he was a Cockney. By that he meant to express his class loyalty rather than a fact. Max—his full name was Harry Maxwell Hayward—was born in London on July 28, 1924, in the respectable lower-middle-class neighborhood of Whetstone, N. 20, well beyond the sound of the bells of Bow Church. His father Harry and his mother, the former Emily Schofield, were unmistakably from Yorkshire. They had alighted in London in 1924 when Harry Hayward, then an itinerant mechanic, found work at the Carrimore truck factory.

Max was fond of identifying himself as a Yorkshireman, but in fact he never actually lived in Yorkshire. His childhood and youth had been spent in many different places, towns and cities, where his father had sought work.

In 1938, when the Haywards moved to Speke, then a rough working-class district of Liverpool, Max's father insisted that he try out for one of the one hundred twenty scholarships given by the Liverpool Institute. This was one of the elite state grammar schools that offered promising lower- and middle-class children something like the education that was provided to the upper classes by the English public schools. Max's winning a scholarship at the Institute constituted a decisive turn in his life, breaking him out of the predestined course of his class and putting him on track for a university education.

In his Liverpool years Max was known as Harry. But at the Institute they called him Happy; it was a school joke. Misery was writ on him then, and straight through to his mid-forties. Reginald Christian, now Professor of Russian at St. Andrew's University, Scotland, was a schoolmate of his and remembers him as aloof, sardonic, and extremely scruffy. Max made no friends, Christian recalls, nor did he participate in the various activities that were expected of the boys in Liverpool's imitation Eton. Sports were out of the question because of an underdeveloped left arm and hand.

By the standards of the Liverpool Institute, Max suffered from several disabilities. He had been entered, not at eleven, the usual age for starting grammar school, but at fourteen. Moreover, he had not studied Greek, which put him at a disadvantage in a school that offered a classical education. As a result, he was placed in the lowest-ranking group of students, who were relegated to the study of Modern Languages—in this case, French and German. Though this may have seemed disgraceful at the time, it turned out to be a blessing for Slavic studies in Britain.

He was still at two removes from Russian. What interested him most at the time was Romany. He had often visited encampments of Gypsies during his childhood peregrina-

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tions through Britain, and in Liverpool he began to teach himself their language so he could communicate with them at their nearby caravan sites. His sympathy for them was profound. Indeed, nothing so exemplifies Max's lifelong compassion for the insulted and injured of the world as his feelings for Gypsies. In the Soviet Union in the late 1940s he once wept with emotion, he told me, when he glimpsed a tattered caravan of Gypsies on the Georgian Military Highway near Tiflis, a rare tribe that had survived Stalin's genocidal policy against them. Max had a personal sense of identification with their nomadic life, their alienation, their impoverishment, their outlaw status, and the brutality of their existence.

His first efforts to learn Russian sprang from his interest in them. He had been encouraged by the remarkable Dora Yates, a librarian at the University of Liverpool who was a specialist in Gypsies and the Secretary of the Gypsy Lore Society. What happened was this. One day when he was leafing through some old volumes in a second-hand book stall in Liverpool, he came upon a huge illustrated work on Gypsies, in Russian. He brought it to Miss Yates, who congratulated him on his find. He then started teaching himself Russian so that he could read the book.

During the cold, grim winter of 1939-40 the Liverpool Institute students were evacuated to Wales and Max began to study Welsh. According to Reginald Christian, this was something none of the other schoolboys would have dreamed of doing. He recalls that one of Max's favorite occupations was visiting old cemeteries to decipher the inscriptions on tombstones. Max always retained his interest in Welsh and he made a hobby of Celtic languages in later years. When I first knew him in the late 1950s, he often, at odd times and in unexpected places—such as, for example, during a lengthy police examination of our baggage at Belgrade Airport—fished out of his pocket for study a small Welsh grammar.

Max went to Oxford in 1942 with a scholarship at Magdalen to read German, a language he soon dropped to concentrate on Russian. There seemed to be little doubt that he would become a pure linguist. In late 1942, A. J. M. Craig, one of the Liverpool Institute's graduates at Oxford, provided the school paper with a report on Max and other old boys: "Dear Editor, You ask for news . . . . Mr. Hayward is reported to have been heard speaking English on one occasion last term. But most of his time is spent discussing in Tibetan with a Russian friend the use of Armenian labials in the Croatian dialect of Yugoslavian."

Max displayed no interest in literature at Oxford, according to Harry Willetts, a close friend at the university. To Max in those years literature was a source of language and little else. He liked to present himself, then and later, as a low-brow, nonliterary type—a "vulgar factologist," as he characterized himself in 1962 at the Conference on Soviet Literature he helped to organize at St. Antony's College. The late Professor Sergei Konovalov, who held the Chair of Russian at Oxford, evidently took Max at his word and decided to civilize the self-styled country bumpkin who had blundered into the community of scholars. Konovalov arranged for Max to take tutorials with Lord David Cecil and Isaiah Berlin. Max called them collectively "the Lords." According to one of Max's friends at Oxford, "with the Lords he was meant to learn to write polished waffle on literary subjects."

The private miseries which Max took with him to Oxford were scarcely alleviated at Magdalen, one of the snootier colleges. In some ways he felt more alienated than ever. For one thing, he was acutely conscious of the fact that the university's normal complement of undergraduates was then serving in the armed forces. (Max had been deemed unfit to serve because of his arm.) To him, Oxford was like an island populated by assorted castaways—oddballs, cripples, refugees. He established a small circle of friends, most of them foreigners. They often used to meet after lunch in Max's "set" or rooms on

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the front quad at Magdalen. Though the view was grand enough, hard upon Magdalen's Deer Park, the room was shabby and dank. Harry Willetts remembers that it had a sofa, two chairs, an utterly inadequate electric fire, and "something dull and dingy on the wall." In those years Max possessed only the barest minimum in the way of books. Willetts recalls that he indulged in no frivolous or casual reading. "He was a most methodical student, and did everything thoroughly."

Max graduated with a first in 1945, but he remained at Oxford two more years. It was during this time that his life first touched upon Boris Pasternak, who was to become his personal and literary hero and the object of his unremitting devotion for twenty years. Apparently by the sheerest accident Max rented a room in the huge old house at 20 Park Town that belonged to Pasternak's sister, Mrs. Lydia Slater. During the two years he lived there he was a favorite of Pasternak's four nieces and nephews. It may have been then that Max was first introduced to Pasternak's work. It is more likely, however, that he was treated to the paintings and drawings of Boris and Lydia's father, the late Leonid Pasternak, who was the principal idol of the Slater household.

Though by 1946 Max had become a Bachelor of Letters candidate under Konovalov and the recipient of a £150 scholarship, he was casting about for something else to do. The first person to make the fateful proposal that put Max on the road to Russia was the President of Magdalen, H. T. Tizard, the scientist who had been responsible for Britain's crucial radar defenses during the war. In a letter written in 1946 congratulating Max on his first, Tizard wrote, "I think it is important for your future career that you should spend some time in Russia, preferably at one of the universities." But the Soviet government was scarcely prepared to accept foreign students. Instead, he went to Charles University in Prague, where he spent the academic year of 1946-47. One could never get much out of him about this period in his life, perhaps because the seeming normality of Czechoslovakia, during the lull before the Communist takeover, did not much kindle his interest. He kept mostly to himself, concentrating on learning Czech. He had discovered Karel Čapek, whose darkly comic visions of robots and salamanders gone amok had a strong appeal for him. Certainly, *R.U.R.* and *War with the Newts* were better preparation for his forthcoming stay in Moscow than any current piece of political writing about the Soviet Union. Probably, Čapek provided the young English linguist with his first experience of the language of symbol and fantasy that has alone proved capable of encompassing the monstrousness of modern totalitarian societies. When Max first returned from Russia he could scarcely talk about the country without quoting Čapek. In the late 1950s, when I first began collaborating with Max, references to newts and robots served as our shorthand for a variety of features of Soviet society.

The Foreign Office, which had been taking its time considering Max for a temporary post in Moscow, informed him in July 1947 that he had been appointed a Third Secretary there. On September 10, 1947, Max arrived in Moscow, where he was to serve for exactly two years. William Barker, a friend from Prague, had also been sent to the Soviet capital, where he was Max's chief. Max was one of a group of able university graduates in Russian, mostly from Oxford, who had been dispatched to Moscow as the result of an enlightened postwar Foreign Office sheme.

According to Barker, the F. O. had acted out of concern over the fact that the majority of people who received visas to visit the Soviet Union were Communists and fellow travelers. Indeed, most writing and reporting about Russia published in Britain (as elsewhere in the West) displayed an uncritical pro-Soviet bias. It was hoped that the young English scholars in Moscow, who would later occupy influential positions in journalism, teaching, and other professions, might become a nucleus of informed opin-

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ion about Russia in Britain. Barker headed the group of seven young men in the so-called Russian Secretariat whose task it was to analyze the Soviet press.

Max arrived in Russia a complete political innocent. Though at home, out of class loyalty, he declared himself pro-Labour, he had hardly any interest in politics, domestic or foreign. His governing passion was language, and his main purpose in going to the Soviet Union was to perfect his knowledge of Russian, especially colloquial Russian. Nothing had prepared him for the series of historical disasters that befell the Soviet people during his stay in Russia.

During his first winter in Russia, a campaign was launched against foreigners and the Soviet citizens who had associated with them during the wartime Allied collaboration and its afterglow. In the latter part of 1947 a decree was passed making it a crime for any Soviet citizen to give foreigners any sort of information. Travel within the country became increasingly difficult for foreigners. Soviet women who went out with foreigners were rounded up and dispatched to the Gulag under Article 7-35 ("Socially Dangerous Elements") of the Criminal Code. The outburst of xenophobia was especially virulent where the British were concerned. In *Pravda* a few weeks after Max's arrival the British military attaché was accused of spying. During the winter two junior members of the embassy were threatened with arrest and trial, one for alleged blackmarketeering, the other for supposedly infecting a Russian girl with syphilis.

In early 1948, on one of his first official missions for the embassy, Max attended a poetry reading (on the theme "Down with the Warmongers!") where he witnessed a deeply affecting public demonstration on behalf of the beleaguered Pasternak. The experience was a shattering one; it brought home to him in the most graphic way the damage that had been done to Russian culture by the 1946 purges of the artistic intelligentsia.

In 1948 there erupted a ferocious campaign against Soviet music, the only branch of the arts that had been spared during the 1946 purges. For months Max's days were spent reading the articles and letters from supposedly indignant readers that flooded the Soviet press with denunciations of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and other composers. In the summer of that year Max was also witness to the destruction of the biological sciences in the Soviet Union. In August Stalin's charlatan agronomist, Lysenko, triumphed over opposition in the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences. There followed a purge of the country's biologists who had resisted the absurd doctrine that heritable changes can be brought about by the environment. At the same time Stalin embarked on an anti-Semitic campaign that characterized Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans," and that resulted in the mass arrest of Jewish writers, the closing of the Jewish State Theater, and the suppression of virtually all Jewish newspapers, periodicals, and publishing houses.

Among the diplomats and foreign correspondents in Moscow at that time, only those who had earlier established relations with Soviet citizens seemed to appreciate the human tragedies unfolding outside their sealed-off compounds. Life within the diplomatic community could be quite agreeable. After the war the usual round of dinners, receptions, and tennis parties at the diplomatic dachas had resumed. Max, however, was in no way suited for these entertainments. Barker recalls that "Max was the only person I have ever seen arrive at his first diplomatic post with all his effects in a knapsack." Dressed in a cheap English suit, complete with baggy trousers, he looked more like a Russian in those austere times than a British diplomat.

He found a congenial roommate in Hugh Lunghi, who, like himself, was not a career diplomat. Lunghi had served as a staff officer and interpreter in the British Military Mission to the Soviet Union during the war, when Russians met with Allied personnel with relative impunity. He had a Russian fiancée, a voice student at the Moscow Conservatory, and he was pulling every string

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he could think of to obtain permission from the Soviet authorities to marry her and leave for England. Since Soviet law forbade marriage to foreigners, permission could be granted only as a result of high-level intervention. Max became friends with the young musician, who often visited the Hayward-Lunghi flat. The two men sometimes spent weekends at her parents' dacha.

In 1947 Lunghi's fiancée was arrested for consorting with a foreigner. That struck at Max's heart. In the months that followed, he accompanied the distraught Lunghi on visits to NKVD headquarters in the Lubyanka Prison, where Lunghi attempted to deliver food parcels for his fiancée. Thus within a year of Max's arrival in the Soviet Union he was participating in the quintessential Stalin-era experience, standing in line outside a prison in the hope of delivering a parcel or getting some scrap of news about a friend or relative in the Gulag. Twenty-five years later he was to translate, in collaboration with Stanley Kunitz, Akhmatova's great poem *Requiem,* which bears witness to the agony of all the children, husbands, wives, and friends who were victims of the terror.

Max was very good at interpreting the Soviet press. Barker recalls that he quickly developed the knack of reading the newspapers as Soviet citizens did, grasping the message that was usually buried in the dense verbiage of a *Pravda* editorial. He was also able to get around Moscow and talk to ordinary Soviet citizens, when the occasion arose, as no career diplomat in the embassy dared to do. According to some of his contemporaries in Moscow, Max was not always taken for a Russian when he mingled with the *narod* (the people). Though he spoke the language perfectly and was attuned to the colloquial vocabulary, the little turns of speech and intonations that are characteristic of a specific walk of life naturally eluded him. Usually, he was taken for a Soviet Jew or a Balt. His ability to communicate with people was, of course, not just a matter of his linguistic gifts. "He had an uncanny knack of getting on to the same net with very alien people," says Barker.

Max's accounts of his forays outside the embassy amazed and sometimes alarmed his superiors. Scarcely in the orthodox mold, his official reports were full of sympathy for Russians, bursting with comic detail and profoundly serious. One example that has survived is the account of a twelve-day trip to the North Caucasus that Max and a junior member of the embassy made in May 1949. Though coauthored (the other man prefers to remain unidentified), this astonishing document bears Max's distinctive stamp.

Clearly, many Soviet citizens in the provinces were unaware of the prohibition against talking with foreigners. As usual, Max's natural affinity with exotic and alien people brought them forth in large numbers. For example, in Tiflis, "as we walked up the street this old Georgian, after asking if we were Germans, and on learning we were English suddenly burst out with a surprising vehemence into a condemnation of the Soviet regime. 'They,' he said, 'have spoiled everything in Tiflis—they are a bunch of Fascists.' He told us he had been in America in 1910 and wished he had never returned to Russia. 'They' had taken everything away from him and reduced him to beggary."

During the entire trip they were followed by the secret police and everywhere they saw signs of the Gulag. "Near one station, when we were already in Georgia, we saw a group of wretched barefooted women repairing the permanent way. They were guarded by an M.V.D. man armed with a rifle. This group was typical of many similar ones we saw, especially in Kutaisi. In Georgia we frequently caught sight of small forced-labor camps, often adjacent to building sites or factories and distinguished by barbed wire fences and raised sentry boxes at each corner."

Two German POWs they met in a hilltop park in Tiflis at first thought the Englishmen were M.V.D. spies because they were too "ill-dressed" to be foreigners. When apprised that they were English, the POWs gave them a full account of the

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number of prisoners in the area and how they were being treated. A young girl they met in a restaurant told them she thought "all the trouble between England and Russia was due to the governments of the two countries. We do not know how our government represents us abroad. We have suffered much from our government and will probably suffer from it in the future." She then told them "quietly and in a matter of fact way" that her father, an engineer, had been arrested in 1938 for "counterrevolutionary activities" and that he had died in a camp.

In early 1949, soon after David Kelly arrived in Moscow to take up the post of British Ambassador, Max was called upon to act as Kelly's interpreter in an interview with Stalin. Obtaining the interview had been quite a coup for Kelly; since the war only the French Ambassador had succeeded in meeting with the dictator. Though the ambassador had a staff interpreter, Kelly had decided to take Max to the Kremlin on the advice of Barker, who had said Max would do a superior job.

The British were given only a day's notice of the interview, which was scheduled for ten o'clock at night. The Ambassador, the minister Geoffrey Harrison, and Max were driven to the main gate of the Kremlin, where a group of officers examined their passes. They were then admitted to the fortress and escorted by a pilot car through the grounds. Bells were rung at intervals to announce their passage. They stopped at a building on the other side of the Kremlin, alongside Red Square. The group entered a small door, climbed a flight of stairs, and were ushered into a large room with a table. The walls were decorated with portraits of Russian generals. Stalin then entered, accompanied by Foreign Minister Andrei Vyshinsky and Vladimir Pavlov, the head of the department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry that dealt with the British Commonwealth. As Kelly noted in his memoir of the meeting, Pavlov was also "a brilliant interpreter."

The dictator, who was in his uniform as Generalissimo, held out his hand and said, "Stalin." Once the group was seated at the table Kelly made a five-minute presentation. He said that both Britain and the Soviet Union were engaged in postwar reconstruction, that there was no possibility of aggression on Britain's side, and that he hoped there would be opportunities for discussion to help remove existing suspicions. Kelly then turned to Max for interpretation into Russian. But Max was silent, visibly awestruck. Pavlov then said quietly that he had been taking notes and would interpret for both Kelly and Stalin, which he proceeded to do, as Max remained frozen speechless during the entire twenty-five-minute interview.

The discussion between Kelly and Stalin was scarcely earthshaking. Stalin said that coexistence was possible, but that suspicion had grown stronger since the signing of the "meaningless" North Atlantic Pact. Kelly assured him that the United States was no more capable of aggression than Britain. The rest of the discussion centered on the problems of British employees of the embassy who had become involved with Russian women. Kelly touched upon the case of the wretched English clerk who had been accused in the Soviet press of infecting a Russian girl with syphilis, indeed, of having brought his infected blood to the Soviet Union in order to spread disgusting diseases there. The mention of this case made Stalin laugh. "Such problems arose from boredom," he said. Upon that note the group departed the Kremlin.

The paralyzing effect of Stalin's presence on Max scarcely needs explanation. Yet to one of his colleagues Max confided that he had gone blank when he caught sight of Stalin's disability, which he had known nothing about. The dictator's withered arm and smallish hand, so like Max's own, lay still upon the table. By the time Kelly began to speak and Stalin started doodling on a sheet of notepaper with his good hand, Max's attention had hopelessly wandered, never to be recovered on that something less than historic night.

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In 1949, when Max returned to England from Russia, he took up the post of University Lecturer in Russian at Oxford. In all his years at Oxford this was the only time he would ever be called upon to teach at the university. His hold on the job was precarious. By all accounts, Konovalov, who had appointed him, soon lost patience with his eccentricities and with his original way of teaching traditional subjects.

In the postwar period, when Oxford's Russian School was small, Max was required to teach a wide variety of subjects ranging from Russian history to linguistics. Michael Glenny, who was an undergraduate at the time, remembers Max's course in Russian phonetics as first-class entertainment. "He made fascinating what had been a dull, pedantic exercise," says Glenny, who has since become a well-known translator from the Russian. Outside of classes, Max had a good deal to tell students that was drawn from first-hand experience of mass police terror in the Soviet Union. "That was invaluable," says Glenny, "for in those years it was virtually impossible to learn Russian without getting a strong dose of Stalinist propaganda from both teachers and students."

It was during this period in Oxford that Max began to drink heavily for the first time. He was often hung over at his morning classes, though he did turn up to teach, which was not always the case after he went to Leeds University in 1952. On the eve of Stalin's death in 1953, Max produced an article for the Leeds University journal *The Gryphon* that showed how much he had learned in Russia and how deeply he had been affected by the experience of Soviet totalitarianism. His article, "The Russian and His Regime," was astonishingly informed and sophisticated for the time. It stands up on every point of fact and nuance thirty years later, when incomparably more is known about the Soviet Union. Part historical summary and part report on his stay in Russia, Max's article focused on the human cost of "socialist construction" and on popular resistance to it. "Almost every major measure of the Soviet Government has been carried through in the teeth of massive though unorganized opposition from wide sections of the people," he wrote, ticking off the Kronstadt Rebellion, the Antonov Uprising, enforced collectivization, and industrialization, which he compared (citing Ilya Ehrenburg) with the building of the pyramids by slave labor. Fully understanding the immensity of the Gulag Archipelago, he wrote of a "vast forced labor camp empire" and of the postwar "mass deportations."

Max was angry. "In some quarters it is regarded as almost indecent to mention such facts as these . . . but they are essential background to any study of 'Soviet Man' unless one is content to accept uncritically the myth created by Soviet propaganda and apparently accepted by many people in the West, irrespective of their political views, that the Russian people are an undifferentiated mass of docile devotees of 'communism.'" He wrote that economic progress had been achieved at the expense of reverting to, and in many cases intensifying, some of the most obnoxious features of czarist Russia. His main point was this: "It is often argued that this was inevitable owing to the anarchic, undisciplined nature of the Russians, and that in any case the Russians have always had (and therefore deserve) a tyrannical form of government. This view seems to me highly questionable and uncharitable."

The article offers a glimpse of Max's intense and unremitting dislike of Western apologists for the Soviet Union. Nothing made him angrier than the suggestion that Russians were at one with their rulers or that they were deserving of or insensitive to oppression because they had never known anything else. He regarded such notions not only as misguided or wrongheaded, but as an insult to the peoples of the Soviet Union. Few outsiders had a more deeply felt awareness of their suffering than Max. He knew it in his bones. Until the end of his days he would remain as unforgiving of whitewash by fellow-travelers in the West as he was tolerant of the subterfuges and deceptions of Soviet citizens seeking to survive.

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Writing in *The American Scholar,* Ronald Hingley, a colleague of Max's at Oxford, recalled one of his responses to whitewash: "For Western citizens sympathetic to the Soviet Union in the wrong way, as he saw it—whether they were categorizable as fellow-travelers, parlor socialists or radical chic-ists—he felt blistering contempt, and would occasionally depart from his usual courtesy to maul them with awesome brutality . . . . Hayward once coined an elaborate conceit whereby he imaginatively transferred the conventional fellow-traveling approach from its traditional Soviet pabulum to an imaginary Hitlerite setting. When Western sympathizers would attempt, in his presence, to justify the horrors of Stalin's concentration camps as an economic necessity, he was apt to murmur, in what he thought were the appropriate simpering tones, a mock exculpation of atrocities no less vile as perpetrated in Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Dachau. 'What you must realize,' he would make his imaginary Hitlerizing fellow traveler explain, 'is that Germany had, at that time, *a perfectly genuine shortage of soap.*'"

In the summer of 1955 Max returned to Moscow. He had accepted a second, temporary appointment to work in the British embassy's Russian Secretariat, where he had served so successfully in the late 1940s. This time, however, his stay was to end in disaster, for he was already in the grip of alcoholism. His downfall came after a trip to the Caucasus, which he had undertaken with a young British diplomat who was also a fluent Russian speaker. Accounts vary about what Max actually did on that trip, but he appears to have caused some sort of *skandal,* as the Russians say, in a Tiflis restaurant. According to one report, he climbed on top of a table and denounced Stalin in Russian, using a wide range of the "four-letter" words he knew so well. Some Georgian diners objected violently to Max's insults; though Stalin was dead, de-Stalinization had not yet taken place and, besides, many Georgians never gave up viewing their late countryman as a national hero. The police were said to have had to intervene in the ensuing melee. Still, the Soviet authorities in Moscow persisted in ignoring Max's shenanigans and his embassy was not notified. It was his traveling companion who insisted that the two men return at once to Moscow.

A diplomat at the embassy, who was a friend of Max's, recalls what followed: "At the time, Max was unorthodox, undisciplined, and intractable, while his companion on the trip was orthodox and ambitious. He immediately squealed on Max to Cecil Parrott, the minister who was in charge of the embassy in the absence of Ambassador William Hayter." A stickler for decorum, Parrott ordered Max to leave the country immediately. That ended Max's chances of returning to the Soviet Union in any official capacity.

In retrospect, it seems clear that he could not have been kept on at the embassy; his alcoholism made him a target for various kinds of exploitation by the Soviets, including blackmail. Still, Parrott's summary dismissal seemed brutal. When Max's diplomat friend went to his hotel room to try to console him on his last night in Moscow, Max was "very upset, very bitter, and very drunk." He felt strongly that he had been unjustly treated. At one point he reached for his British passport and had to be restrained from tearing it up.

Max returned to Moscow for two weeks the following summer, this time on assignment for the *Daily Telegraph.* He was determined to drink less—he could still, in fact, stop drinking for weeks at a time—and did not get into any scrapes. It was just as well; the NKVD was waiting for him. The close attention he was given by the secret police was striking at that time, four months after the Twentieth Party Congress, when surveillance of foreigners had become less systematic and more discreet. From the outset, Max was constantly shadowed by two men on foot. Surveillance was soon reinforced by eight more plainclothesmen traveling in two cars. In intelligence parlance, such an operation is known as "intimidation surveillance." Obviously, the authorities were con-

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vinced that Max was much too knowledgeable and were determined to isolate him from Soviet citizens. This was to be his last trip to Russia.

Max returned to Leeds feeling defeated and depressed. Drinking heavily again, he had trouble keeping up with his university duties. His affliction had already damaged his health. Toward the end of his stay in Leeds, after he had been hospitalized following a bad bout, he seemed to be living on the chocolate bars he bought when he went out for the cigarettes he chain-smoked.

Rescue was at hand. In 1956, at this very low point in Max's life, he was invited to become a Research Fellow of the Russian and East European Center that was being established at St. Antony's College, Oxford. David Footman, who was in charge of setting up the new center, remembers that Max was "in appalling health and very unhappy; we hoped that he would be happier when he joined us." And he was. For the next twelve years or so, Max's association with St. Antony's was his lifeline. He had acquired a solid base which was as much a home as it was an academic setting. And he had gained two friends, F. W. Deakin, the Warden, and George Katkov, a College Fellow, who recognized his great human qualities and the contribution he might make to Russian studies, if only he could be let alone.

Let alone he was. "It was obvious that he didn't like administration and routine," Footman recalls. He was given few chores to perform and those he had, he liked: buying books and periodicals for the Center and setting up a reading room. At first he could scarcely participate in the weekly college seminars; his first attempt to talk on Soviet literature ended in mid-lecture, when "he dried up from sheer nerves," according to Footman. The following term, however, he got through some seminars and even began teaching Russian to four or five St. Antony graduate students.

He cheered up and drank a bit less. In 1956 he made one of his periodic plunges into a new language. This time he chose one of the most daunting, Hungarian. He had an immersion system which he had devised: he holed up in his rooms at the college and with a Hungarian grammar and dictionary in hand he taught himself the language in six weeks—a remarkable feat.[1]

That Max should have found a haven in the heart of Oxford was a miracle wrought by Bill Deakin. St. Antony's was Deakin's creation. He had become its first warden in 1950, when it was established as the first graduate college in Oxford. Deakin, who had recently visited graduate schools in the United States, wanted to establish regional studies centers on the American model at a single Oxford college. The university had raised money from private French sources for St. Antony's, which was full of foreigners of every description. In short, it was a thoroughly untraditional and unsnobbish place.

Max was more open with foreigners than with his English colleagues about his attitude toward Oxford. Kolakowski, who first met him there on a visit from Poland in 1958, recalls: "He would occasionally burst out with his intense dislike for Oxford—the aristocratic, arrogant, self-confident, self-satisfied Oxonian university milieu. Though he had good friends at Oxford he felt, as a working-class man, that he didn't belong there. St. Antony's was different."

Max had enormous respect for Deakin, an historian eleven years his senior who had led the first British Military Mission to Tito in

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1 Before he died, Max had mastered fifteen modern languages and two classical ones, Latin and Greek. His greatest achievement was of course his perfect command of Russian, but he knew the other major Slavic languages in this descending order of proficiency: Czech, Serbo-Croat, Bulgarian, Polish. Of the Romance languages he knew French well and had a working knowledge of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Rumanian that could be activated after a few days' contact with native speakers. His German was excellent. So was his modern Greek. He had a passive knowledge of Hungarian, Hebrew, and Welsh. (I am not counting his early speaking acquaintance with Romany and brief flurries with Ladino and Lallans.)

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1943, during the partisan fighting, and who later served as First Secretary at the British Embassy in Belgrade. Max was warmed by Deakin's evident affection for him and by his unswerving support during the years when Max was often incapacitated by drink. With Deakin's backing Max was elected to an "Official Fellowship" at St. Antony's in 1960, which gave him membership in the college's governing body and, in effect, life tenure, happily without imposing teaching obligations beyond those he voluntarily assumed.

Max was extremely fond of Pussy Deakin, Bill's Rumanian wife. "I was a foreigner and hence, to him, classless," she says. Exotic, beautiful, intelligent, Pussy was, I believe, Max's first ideal of a woman. She made frequent efforts to straighten him out, scolding when he arrived, tight, for dinner or with buttons missing from his jacket and shirt. She also badgered him to get married. Max told her: "With my background—just listen to the way I talk—and my intellect, who could I find? And I like sophisticated, good-looking women." For his part, Bill urged him to patch things up with his mother and father, with whom he had virtually broken relations. He would dutifully go off to Sheffield, where his parents then lived, but the excursions would end in a row. Though Max would continue to return to his parents' home from time to time, he remained estranged from his father.

It is not glib psychologizing, I think, to suggest that in George Katkov, Max found a Russian father. This was, simply, the best thing that ever happened to Max. The two men had extraordinary rapport. Both were originals, the one a tall, mustachioed, hugely impressive *ancien régime* Russian *intelligent,* the other a prodigious offshoot of the British working classes. They talked constantly, excitedly, and at breathtaking speed, their conversation a puzzlement to the outsider seeking to follow the permutations of their interest in Russia. Max was always testing his Russian against Katkov's superb command of his native language, Max correcting his elder (by twenty-one years) and being corrected in a game that never seemed to tire either one.

A grandnephew of Mikhail Katkov, the nineteenth-century conservative publisher, Georgi Mikhailich (as Max always called him) had emigrated to England in 1939, settling in Oxford after the war. A philosopher and historian, G. M. had worked for the BBC before becoming a University Lecturer in Soviet Institutions and a Fellow of St. Antony's. He had come to know Max in the early 1950s, and it was he who first helped haul Max out of what Pussy Deakin called "his dark hole" at Leeds by recommending him to St. Antony's. A man of immense kindness and generosity of feeling, G. M. drew Max into the light and warmth of his family circle in Oxford.

It was also G. M. who brought *Doctor Zhivago* to Max. The background was this. On a short trip to Moscow in 1956, G. M. had met with Pasternak; the poet told him that he had given the manuscript of a novel to the agent of the Italian publisher Feltrinelli. (Pasternak's farewell remark to the agent was: "You are as of now invited to my execution.") Pasternak was now concerned that Feltrinelli would not publish the book, especially since Pasternak expected to be forced by the Soviet authorities to instruct Feltrinelli to halt publication (eventually Pasternak sent such a cable, but Feltrinelli ignored it, publishing *Doctor Zhivago* in Italian in November 1957). He gave another copy of the manuscript to G. M., asking him to get it out of Russia in some secure way and to see to its translation and publication in England as quickly as possible.

Possible translators were discussed. Pasternak suggested Isaiah Berlin, who had translated Turgenev's short novel *First Love.* G. M. said he thought the Zhivago poems would present a special translation problem. The poet was not worried. "It's quite easy," he said. "Just look at my translations of Rilke." "Easy for you," said G. M.

G. M. then suggested "someone quite special" to translate the poetry. "There's one man, a poet, who is completely bilingual: Vladimir Nabokov." Pasternak said, "That

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won't work; he's too jealous of my wretched position in this country to do it properly."[2]

G. M. recalls: "I gave Pasternak my promise that *Doctor Zhivago* would be well translated and I kissed him on it." The manuscript duly arrived in Oxford and G. M. had a chance to read it through. "I saw that it would shake the literary world," he says. He went to Isaiah Berlin and told him that Pasternak wanted the book translated and published quickly. "That's all nonsense," Berlin said. "It's an interesting novel, but whether it's published now, or fifteen years from now, doesn't matter."

G. M. says: "I decided to give the manuscript to Max, who had never done any translations, to test his reaction. I didn't tell him that I was thinking of him as a possible translator. The novel was an enormous shock to him; he was simply electrified. The Zhivago poems meant much less to him. He had no inkling of poetry at the time, but it would gradually grow on him." (In fact, Max was to produce plain prose versions of the poems that are, in my view, the best translations that have been made so far in English. They appeared only in the British edition of *Doctor Zhivago*.)

At this time, several other copies of the manuscript were circulating in Europe, some mysteriously, causing no end of confusion and leading to the publication in 1958 of an unauthorized edition in Russian. According to Max's friend, Leopold Labedz, at least two British publishers turned the book down when it was submitted to them by Feltrinelli. Meanwhile G. M. had brought Manya Harari into the picture. Manya immediately understood the book's importance and obtained publication rights for Harvill, the small house which she had founded with Marjorie Villiers and which had become a subsidiary of the giant Collins firm. Labedz recalls that at this time "Collins had no idea what they had in *Doctor Zhivago*."

Since speed had been requested by Pasternak, it was decided that the book needed two translators. G. M. brought Max and Manya together for a collaboration and a friendship that was to endure until Manya's death in 1969. To translate *Doctor Zhivago,* they decided to do alternate chapters, then revise each other's work. G. M. was the ultimate arbiter, going over everything for accuracy and nuance.

Max repaired for a time to a room in his parents' house near Sheffield, while Manya worked on her chapters at her beautiful town house on Catherine Place in London. There were difficulties, G. M. recalls. Max was very slow and careful, while Manya went forward boldly and confidently, making a great many mistakes. The two met over each other's versions in Manya's top-floor eyrie, a low-ceilinged, immensely untidy little room that the two chain-smoking translators kept filled with smoke.

Manya and Max finished the translation of *Doctor Zhivago* in a year. In January 1959, after a visitor to Russia brought Pasternak a copy of the British edition of his novel, he wrote to Billy Collins, the publisher, that he was "eternally" the "enthralled debtor" of his English translators. Pasternak was a judge of translation; he had produced the classic Russian translations of seven Shakespeare plays. I myself can testify to Pasternak's enthusiasm. In May 1959, when I visited him in Peredelkino, bringing messages from Manya and Max, he held out his arms to me with extraordinary fervor, saying: "I embrace my translators." At the height of the Soviet attack on him for having

2 He was right. Nabokov was to publicly ridicule *Doctor Zhivago* and mock Pasternak's suffering at the hands of his Soviet persecutors by producing a parody of Pasternak's famous poem "The Nobel Prize" (1959). A stanza of Pasternak's poem reads: "But what wicked thing have I done, / I, the 'murderer' and 'villain'? / I, who force the whole world to cry / Over my beautiful land." In his parody Nabokov referred to some of the critical reaction to his own *Lolita*: "But what wicked thing have I done? / I, the seducer and villain? / I, who force the whole world to dream / Of my poor girl child." Nabokov, in a final stanza, suggests that though he is out of synchronization with the Soviet era, it is ultimately to him that Russia will erect a monument.

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published *Doctor Zhivago* abroad, he took the quite risky step of instructing Feltrinelli to send Manya and Max each a gift of £4000 out of his royalties. The sum was a fortune to Max, who like Manya had received a minimal fee for the translation, but he gave £2000 to G. M., who was in the hospital at the time.

The Harari-Hayward translation of *Doctor Zhivago* was published by Harvill in England in September 1958 and in an "Americanized" version by Pantheon Books in the United States in October. The same month Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Early reviews were ecstatic. In London the *Times* asked, "A new *War and Peace*?" while the *Daily Express* declared that "no novel of this century has drawn such worldwide acclaim immediately upon publication." Meanwhile, the mounting attack on Pasternak in the Soviet Union served in the West to sharpen both support for the author and interest in his book.

It was in the light of all this publicity that Max left for the United States to take up a research fellowship at the Harvard Russian Research Center which was to run from mid-September to the end of June. Shortly after his arrival in Cambridge, *The New Yorker* of November 15, 1958, published a review of *Doctor Zhivago* by Edmund Wilson. Wilson wrote: "*Doctor Zhivago* will, I believe, come to stand as one of the great events in man's literary and moral history . . . a great act of faith in art and the human spirit." But readers of the translation, he cautioned, would scarcely be able to come to the same conclusion as Wilson, who had read the book in Russian.

"The reader of the Pantheon translation," Wilson wrote, "should be told that *Doctor Zhivago* is a richer, a solider, a subtler, and more intense work than he will be able to find out from this version of it. So much of the detail has been scrapped, so many of the descriptions have been dismantled, and so many of the conversations have been telescoped that there are moments when one could almost imagine the translators have been doing a job for the *Reader's Digest*."

To substantiate his charge, Wilson offered a number of examples of mistranslation. One was a howler for which Manya and Max were responsible. A reference in the book to Arzamas, a literary society to which Pushkin belonged, had been identified only as a place name. Wilson also picked up a few other errors, the worst being that Lara's hair had been called "dark" (a confusion that had been prompted by Pasternak's description of her hair as scattered on a pillow: "the smoke of its beauty . . .") and that gold bells on fire towers had been identified as "the golden tops of belfries." Six other translation errors noted by Wilson had not been made by the British translators. They had been introduced in the course of "Americanizing" the Harari-Hayward version for Pantheon. The mistakes do not appear in the British edition.

Most of Wilson's objections came down to questions of interpretation. In a typical quibble, he wrote: "The intent observation of Pasternak is constantly sacrificed. The rich soil 'which shows brown in the sun with varying shades of chocolate and coffee' is turned into 'the black soil . . . shimmered with rich golden browns.'" But Wilson's translation of Pasternak's *"smuglela na solntse shokoladno-kofeinym otlivom"* is too flat and mechanical. The American edition's "shimmering" is not quite right either, though hardly worth all the fuss. The original Harari-Hayward version as it appeared in England is closer to the Russian: "the black soil . . . was sun-burnt to a coffee-chocolate brown." ("Sun-burnt" is quite ingenious.)

The worst howler was committed by Wilson himself in his review. Following a long passage in which he attempted to extrapolate Pasternak's religious views from the novel, he wrote: "The translators made Zhivago say to his love when they part for the last time, 'Farewell . . . until we meet in the next world,' but this is not in the text and would be contrary to Zhivago's cosmology. What Pasternak makes him say is that he will never see her again 'in life'; he merely bids her 'farewell in this world,' which does not imply meeting in Heaven."

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The "next world" is indisputably in the Russian text: *"Proshchai . . . do svidaniya na tom svete."* The phrase is simple and straightforward; it would be clearly understood by a first-year Russian student. Wilson's mistake does not seem to have resulted from a hasty reading. He had apparently pondered the line, which seemed to him to confound his notion of Pasternak's "cosmology."

So gross a mistake raised the question—later to be pursued with a vengeance by Vladimir Nabokov—of Wilson's proficiency in Russian. It would seem that this most erudite man's great weakness was that he loved to display linguistic expertise he scarcely possessed. A favorite pastime of his late years was fiddling about with exotic languages—notably Russian, Hungarian, and Hebrew. Where Russian was concerned he sometimes relied on people who had little to offer by way of linguistic or literary competence but the fact that they were native Russian speakers. Many of Wilson's attempts to wring significance out of Pasternak's use of the number five ("the five barless windows of the house in Siberia are the five wounds of Jesus") and his choice of Christian names and surnames ("It is obvious that Pasternak wants to suggest *zhivoy,* 'alive, living' by the name Zhivago") appear to have been inspired by Evgenia Lehovich, a ballet teacher who later collaborated with Wilson on a piece called "Legend and Symbol in *Doctor Zhivago*" (*Encounter,* June 1959). (Decoding of this kind is best left until the author is dead. Max showed me a letter written by Pasternak that contained a laconic comment on the "Legend and Symbol" article. "Whoever has seen such symbols in *Doctor Zhivago,*" Pasternak wrote, "has not read my novel.")

The most damaging part of Wilson's review of *Doctor Zhivago* was of course not his catalogue of translation errors, but his charge that the Harari-Hayward version had debased Pasternak's book. This was nonsense. Though the original translation as modified by its Americanizers lost some of its elegance and sharpness and was coarsened by some banality of language, both the British and the American versions are remarkably true to the original.

I have looked at the files kept by Max and the Harvill Press in the wake of the Wilson review. Manya was outraged; she shot off a letter to Wilson, commenting in detail on each of his charges of mistranslation, politely calling attention to his own mistake and pointing out that six of the errors had been made in New York, without consultation with the original translators. The reply from the irrepressible Wilson is not in the files, but Marjorie Villiers, Manya's partner at Harvill, commented on it in a letter to Helen Wolff. She and her husband Kurt were Pasternak's editors at Pantheon. "Manya has had a letter from Edmund Wilson," Villiers wrote. "He doesn't seem to know Russian thoroughly as he makes nine mistakes which one would think he could avoid in criticizing a specific sentence . . . . He also refers to a sentence not in our edition which is plainly wrong." Meanwhile, Kurt Wolff had written to Wilson, thanking him for his rave review in *The New Yorker.* He told Wilson that some of the errors he had mentioned had been corrected in the British version at the last minute, but that the translators had neglected to inform Pantheon of the changes.[3]

No defense of the Harari-Hayward translation was ever made in public. In her letter to Helen Wolff, Villiers wrote: "We understood from Max that you did not want *The New Yorker* to get a reply to Wilson's article so Manya has shouldered the six inaccurate 'improvements' you made to our text, and Wilson's own piece of nonsense about heaven. [Edward] Crankshaw who has seen both texts has been boiling to reply to it; but as he is going to Russia I daresay he will forget to do so and we will not remind him."

Wilson's review loomed large in Max's life. He was devastated by the sweeping nature of the criticism. He felt that literary people in America were under the impression that he

3 Taking into account the handful of actual errors detected by Wilson, Max later somewhat revised both the British and the American editions.

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had somehow spoiled *Doctor Zhivago.* One immediate result was that he went on a bender in Cambridge that landed him in the hospital. It was typical of him that a few months later he cheerfully agreed to meet with Wilson over cocktails in Boston. They never discussed the *Doctor Zhivago* translation and soon became drinking buddies. When Max came to visit me on Cape Cod in the early 1960s, Wilson would sometimes invite Max to his house in Wellfleet, where the two met in the friendliest way.

In 1965, it was to Max that Wilson turned for help when Nabokov exultantly nailed Wilson for the mistakes in Russian he had made in his critique of Nabokov's translation of *Eugene Onegin.* Though Wilson was beyond rescue for his out-and-out errors, Max formulated for him some ingenious ripostes on disputed questions of pronunciation (including the comical rejoinder that Nabokov favored the Minsk accent over that of St. Petersburg), for which Wilson, without naming Max, credited "a professional English linguist who specializes in Russian" (*New York Review of Books,* August 26, 1965).

My first meeting with Max came about two weeks after he had been hit by the Wilson review. Marshall Shulman, then Associate Director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard, had had the wonderful idea of sending him to see me in New York. Max arrived one November morning at my door dressed in a U.S. Navy surplus pea jacket that had been given to him in Cambridge by a pitying Walter Laqueur, a very much smaller man than Max. The jacket had been bleached pinkish by age and, possibly, washing. All but one button was missing. The most striking thing to me about his appearance were the long streaks of ash, like snail trails, that covered the entire front of his dark suit. His fine and, yes, aristocratic face was ashen as well. His malaise was frightful. He never looked me in the eye. He asked if I had any Guinness in the apartment; he settled for bourbon. Once installed in the darkest corner of the living room he drawled out, "Well, I suppose you're one of the American admirers of Pasternak." I was not yet accustomed to the British ironic mode. Taken aback, I said, "I am, and so what?"

Like most of his women friends, I was touched by his obvious helplessness in all the practical matters of everyday life. I bought him at Macy's a green dufflecoat with a hood, which cheered him up. And I put him to work on a collection of Mayakovsky's lyrical verse that I had undertaken in 1958. A novice, and with little knowledge of Russian at the time, I had commissioned the Irish poet and translator George Reavey to translate the poems I had selected. He had already produced some versions, which looked very odd to me. Roman Jakobson confirmed my suspicions: they were full of frightful mistakes. It remained for me to persuade Reavey to make vast numbers of corrections without hurting his feelings. Max stood by while I softened George up with whiskey and compliments on his more felicitous renderings. Then Max moved in for the extraction; a little Russian patter, a reassuring smile, and the whole offending passage had been painlessly removed. Reavey was a jolly fellow who enjoyed these sessions, which lasted through much of the winter, as much as we did. At the same time, Max had begun translating some of the poetry and the play *The Bedbug,* which we had decided to include in the book. One day as I was finishing my introduction, Max electrified me by arriving at my apartment with a Hebrew grammar and with language records, which he proceeded to play on my hi-fi. It was his first immersion in that language.

Besides the Mayakovsky book, *The Bedbug and Selected Poetry,* Max and I were to work together on two anthologies of contemporary Russian literature in translation and a volume of Andrei Voznesensky's poetry—a translation project involving six American poets who knew no Russian. We were a good team, I believe. By the end of our collaboration we were so attuned to each other's ideas that we could write a perfectly seamless essay together. Max was a solitary man who, in those years, had to have com-

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pany in order to work. "He needed a setting," Deakin remembers. I provided some serious company and a setting in which he felt comfortable.

Max loved New York. For the next decade he managed to come back nearly every year for lectures, scholarly conferences, and short-term research or teaching appointments at Columbia University. In general, Max felt comfortable in America, which he perceived as a classless society. It was a relief to him that no one cared or was even aware of his proletarian background, or associated his way of speaking with class. Still, he was lonesome for St. Antony's. To Bill Barker he complained that people were being too nice to him. "I'm nostalgic for the discomforts of England," he wrote. He missed G. M., with whom he exchanged letters several times a week. He often reminisced about the Horse and Jockey and the Gardner's Arms in North Parade, pubs which functioned, when Max was in Oxford, as seminar rooms for students of Russian. His first winter in America was the only time he ever talked with me about the misery and trauma of his childhood, his personal life, and his attachment to G. M. and Bill Deakin. America had been an opening-up and Max was at his most vulnerable. He was alive with pain.

Max was in Oxford in mid-August of 1960 when Olga Ivinskaya (Pasternak's "Lara") and her daughter Irina were arrested on trumped-up charges of currency speculation two months after the poet's death. Fear for Ivinskaya's safety had been an obsession in the final years of Pasternak's life. "If, God forbid, they should arrest Olga," he wrote to a friend in the West, "all tocsins should ring, for an attack on her is in fact a blow at me."

Max took Pasternak's injunction to heart. His energy was astonishing. He traveled around Britain persuading prominent people like Bertrand Russell to appeal to Khrushchev on the two women's behalf. When he learned that Eleanor Roosevelt was passing through Paris, he flew to France. Her assistant, Diana Michaelis, recalled how Mrs. Roosevelt had been impressed with Max's meticulous presentation of the facts. In spite of her concern for civil rights, she had never before attempted to intervene with the Soviets on behalf of a prisoner of the regime. But she readily agreed to write a letter to Khrushchev along the lines he suggested. Meanwhile, the Western press was full of stories of the martyrdom of Ivinskaya, who had already served four years in the camps for her association with Pasternak. All this pressure and publicity did not prevent the Soviet authorities from sentencing Ivinskaya to eight years and her daughter to three. It may, however, have contributed to the decision to release them early, Irina in 1962 and her mother in 1964.

Max's authority and conviction made him extraordinarily effective at arousing public opinion on behalf of imprisoned Soviet intellectuals. He was to engage in this kind of political action one more time, when Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel were arrested in 1965. Max and Leo Labedz put everything aside in order to gather signatures to appeals and protests. Max, who was a frequent contributor to Leo's journal, *Survey,* collaborated with his friend on a book about the notorious 1966 trial of the two writers.

Max's interest in Sinyavsky and Daniel dated back to the death of Pasternak. I recall studying with Max some shattering pictures of the procession to the grave site; he identified for me two men who had helped carry the coffin: Sinyavsky and Daniel. We were soon to become involved with them, without knowing it. I obtained and published in our anthology, *Dissonant Voices in Soviet Literature,* a powerful *samizdat* story, "This Is Moscow Speaking," by Daniel, who was known to us only by the pseudonym Nikolai Arzhak. *The Trial Begins* and stories by Abram Tertz, which Max had translated for Harvill, were revealed at the trial to have been written by Sinyavsky. Later, Max collaborated on a translation of the exceptionally difficult *A Voice from the Chorus.* When Sinyavsky was attacked in émigré circles for his book on Pushkin, Max came forward

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with his essay on Sinyavsky, "Pushkin, Gogol, and the Devil," which is one of his finest pieces of literary criticism.

At the center, always, was the figure of Pasternak. In the mid-1970s he persuaded Helen Wolff, now at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, and Marjorie Villiers, at Harvill, to publish Alexander Gladkov's *Meetings with Pasternak.* Max felt that the book had been undeservedly slighted—it would surely never have been published in English without his intervention—and although he was exhausted after completing his translation of 1,300 pages of Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoirs, he consented to translate Gladkov. He then vowed never to do another translation. Shortly thereafter, the manuscript of Olga Ivinskaya's memoir *A Captive of Time* was brought to him. He felt obliged to do it. He told Villiers, "It's unfinished business." He reminded her that Pasternak had said one must behave to Ivinskaya as one would to him.

In 1962 I returned from a short trip to Russia full of enthusiasm about the work of the young writers and poets who were breaking down all the conventions of orthodox Soviet literature. On my way home I met with Max in Geneva and persuaded him to edit with me an anthology of the exciting new Russian writing which we ultimately entitled *Halfway to the Moon,* after a story by Vasili Aksyonov. I also wanted to lure Max into a scheme to translate the work of the young Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky in collaboration with some American poets. Max would have to act as the linguistic interpreter since the Americans I had in mind at the time, W.H. Auden, Richard Wilbur, and Stanley Kunitz, knew no Russian. Max thought it couldn't be done. I had brought Voznesensky's poetry from Moscow and Max pronounced it too difficult, too allusive, and too full of linguistic play to cross the cultural divide. Still, he was willing to try.

Max nearly died of drink that spring. The doctor told him that if he didn't swear off alcohol at once he had no time at all to live. He stopped drinking—and smoking—then and there. It was a heroic achievement. In July, by way of distraction, I proposed to him that we go to Austria, where Auden had a house, in order to work with him on the Voznesensky translations. Max liked the idea. He had been vastly impressed with Auden in New York when they had worked on a version of Voznesensky's "Parabolic Ballad."

The theme was set for our whole stay when we were greeted along the highway out of Vienna airport by a series of billboards flashing one word, the brand name of an Austrian ice cream that is strikingly similar to the four-letter Russian word for ass. There was no end to the laughter provoked by that sign, which pursued us nearly all the way to Wystan Auden's house near Kirchstetten.

He was waiting for us, standing on a hillock with a spade in his hand, a magnificent edifice. I now know he looked just as Voznesensky later described him, like a burnt-out cathedral. I wondered what Max would make of him *in situ.* I had known Wystan for years and had visited him when he and Chester Kallman lived in Forio d'Ischia, so his domestic arrangements could scarcely hold any surprises for me. But for Max? I had no idea how much of Wystan's work he had read or indeed whether he was aware that he was a homosexual. And I had absolutely no intention of preparing Max for anything; he was always irritated at me when I volunteered any information about our friends' love affairs or breakups, let alone sexual preferences—he regarded all such talk as low gossip.

Wystan brought us round to the house, where he introduced us to a twenty-year-old boy in a bikini who was seated on the ground with his back to a wall. Wystan identified him as the boyfriend of Chester Kallman, Wystan's own longtime lover (as he helpfully explained to Max), who was currently living in Greece. Chester had dispatched the boy, who was Greek and spoke no English, to Kirchstetten so that he might recover from tuberculosis. The boy, we learned, was an *evzone,* on military sick leave.

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Now without his skirt, his tasseled hat, pompoms on his shoes, and other accoutrements of the Greek military honor guard, he looked disarmed and depressed.

Max took this in with perfect composure. Soon Wystan was all business. He and Max got down to work in the middle of a field where Wystan had plunked down some new garden furniture he was proud of. Max and I had already established a system for working with the poets who were contributing to our book. We prepared some literal versions; when the poet had selected what he or she liked, Max would do the crucial work of explaining the associations, the exotic references, the slang, the jargon, and also the obscenities sometimes concealed in Voznesensky's rhymes. Wystan was exceptionally demanding. He wanted what he called prosodic models. These were transliterations of the Russian text into the English alphabet, with an interlinear English translation in the same word order as the Russian original.

Every day of our stay Wystan sat out in the field studying the Russian rhyme scheme on the prosodic model we had prepared overnight, while Max read the poem to him in Russian. Then they would sort out the sense. It was a joy to hear the two men work together, both so quick to penetrate the living heart of a line in brisk, commonsensical tones, both so English, after all.

Wystan again tried to shock Max. After the translation sessions the poet would sometimes read bits of his new work to us, mostly from *Around the House,* which he was putting together then. Fixing Max in the eye he read "The Geography of the House": "Lifted off the potty, / Infants from their mothers / Hear their first impartial / Words of worldly praise: / Hence, to start the morning / With a satisfactory / Dump is a good omen / All our adult days."

Max was politely appreciative. Nothing Wystan said could disconcert him. Wystan tried a similar tactic with Voznesensky when I accompanied him to their first meeting, which took place in Auden's apartment on St. Mark's Place in New York. Wystan had immediately launched into a monologue on the problems of translation, while the Russian watched him silently, plainly awestruck. Suddenly Wystan asked Andrei, "Now what would you do in Russian with the saying 'he doesn't know his ass from a hole in the ground'?" Though by now Andrei understood English quite well, he turned to me for elucidation. I fumbled for words, gripped by hysterical laughter as the emergent image grew starker as I translated it. Andrei joined me in laughter that may have seemed excessive to our host. Andrei asked for a sheet of paper, wrote out his rendering of the saying, signed it, and presented it to Wystan. When I reproduced the translation for Max he pronounced it to be a true gem of Russian obscenity.

I often was not present when Max met with the poets who contributed to *Antiworlds,* our Voznesensky volume. Richard Wilbur, who provided some of our most beautiful versions, gave William Jay Smith an account of his collaboration with Max: "With all the precision that his expert counseling demanded, Max was incredibly leisurely in his approach. Each time he came into the living room, he went like a dog to his favorite spot at the end of the sofa, sat down, and launched immediately into a relaxed conversation on a wide variety of subjects. The two men circled around the poems for a good while, but when they finally came to examine them in detail, the information that Max provided was thorough and exact. Max operated like a tuning fork, giving the proper pitch of each word and assisting the poet in not straying from it."

Bill Smith, who contributed the most verse to *Antiworlds* and who later worked with Max and Vera Dunham on a second volume of Voznesensky's poetry, *Nostalgia for the Present,* has written a tribute to Max entitled "A Prince among Translators." "During our sessions Max never once consulted a Russian-English dictionary," Smith wrote. "He served not only as a dictionary but as an encyclopedia, giving complete information on each poem's place in the work of Voznesensky, its place alongside the

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work of other contemporary poets and poets of the past, its historical, political, sociological and scientific allusions."

Stanley Kunitz worked with Max first on Voznesensky translations and later on the volume they produced entitled *Poems of Akhmatova.* During their work together Kunitz had asked Max to indicate in his literal versions any word that had interior ambiguities. "Max was very excited about doing that. In his literals he gave every possible connotation of a word, rooting out the sense. His approach was that of a scholar studying a text; he could have been working with Etruscan."

Max frequently helped other translators. He was especially pleased to offer his assistance to beginners. "He had a way of making you feel that you were not importuning him—that the work itself was all-important," says Ellen de Kadt, who had turned to him for help in translating Roy Medvedev's *On Socialist Democracy.* Harry Shukman's debut as a translator was a collaboration with Max on Yevgeni Shvarts's play *The Dragon.* "Working with him was like taking a holiday," Shukman recalls. "We would throw dialogue back and forth until we came up with a nice-sounding phrase. There was never any competitiveness. Some other master of the craft could have made you feel like dirt, but never once in our relationship did I feel overpowered by Max. He was the same with students, treating them with extreme gentleness; he was never cruel, even with the worst."

As I had with other friends of Max, I talked with Harry about the extraordinary charm Max exercised over people. After all, he had been a quiet, diffident, and at times markedly unsociable man. Yet he possessed a luminous charm that defied definition. It was Harry who put his finger on it. "For a long time I thought that Jews in the Soviet Union were Max's major interest in life," said Harry, who has made a specialty of that subject at Oxford. "Max talked with you about what mattered most to you as if nothing in the world interested him more."

By the late 1960s Max and I had completed our last collaborative effort, an expanded edition of our Voznesensky book, and I gradually began to lose the thread of Max's life. It started in Greece where I spent several months in 1968. In Athens one morning I had breakfast in an outdoor café with Max's friend Dimitri Obolensky, who holds the Chair of Russian and Balkan History at Oxford. I told him I was overwhelmed by the beauty of Greece. "You ought to persuade Max to come here," he said. "Greece is the only substitute for Russia." I thought: it is for Dimitri perhaps—he's a Byzantinist—but for Max and me, never.

Still, there was something to the observation made by Dimitri, who is a Russian exile. I remembered it a few months later when Max and I escaped for a week from the New York winter to St. Martin, an island in the West Indies that made me yearn for the Cyclades. I talked then to Max about Greece, urged him to take a trip there, and told him about Dimitri's remark.

Before I knew it, he was gone. In my mind I could never really follow him to Greece. The whole of my life had taken its shape from Russia. Since I was barred from returning there—like Max, because of my writings—the pain of losing contact with the living country had never relented. Greece was light, beauty, and ancient history, but Russia was my *place,* here and now. Max had found another place. Some one of his friends who knew his life there will, I hope, pick up the narrative. I can only sketch in a few details.

He went for the first time in 1969 for a Russian cause. Suzanne Massie had invited him to join her in Greece so that they might work together on an anthology of unofficial Leningrad poets. When Max began to learn Greek, first modern, then classical, he was mesmerized by the continuity of language. Soon he had committed pages of Homer to memory, much as he had learned Pasternak years before, and he could reproduce conversations between Zeus and Hera and describe every detail of the armor of warriors in battle. He was critical of existing trans-

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lations of Homer; during the last year of his life he wrote an elaborate proposal for a new translation of the *Iliad* that he wished to undertake, together with an introduction and commentaries on each book of the poem. He wrote to St. Antony's inquiring about how he might sever his relation to the college and he told friends he was considering giving up his British nationality and becoming a citizen of Greece.

He set about building a little house on the Aegean island of Spetsai, fifty yards from the home of Jane Joyce and her husband Robert, a retired American diplomat. It was they who created the setting for Max's last years. Social life on Spetsai was frenetic. Max met a wide range of celebrities at dinner parties on the island, among them, Truman Capote, Baron Keith of Castleacre, Mary Martin, Winston Churchill, the prime minister's grandson, and Swifty Lazar.

Still, it seemed that Max had not abandoned Russia altogether. Anne Kindersley, who visited Spetsai with her husband Richard, a St.Antony's Fellow, recalls this scene: "As I sat lazily on board a Greek caique moored for a day's picnic off Spetsai and watched Max and Richard swimming side by side, there floated across the water the words, '*samizdat* . . . *Novy Mir* . . . Tvardovsky.'" Russians and specialists in Russian began to come to Spetsai in increasing number. Max had a separate apartment built onto his house and invited the Katkovs to visit whenever they pleased. He loaned the house to Leonard and Roma Schapiro and to the Kolakowskis.

Max began spending at least half of every year in Greece, sometimes much more. For a brief time, however, Israel was to compete for his attention. I had long been aware of his particular liking for Jews and his interest in things Jewish. When he visited Israel in 1975 and 1977 I received ecstatic letters and postcards. Max's old friend Baruch Knei-Paz, a political scientist at the Hebrew University who had been a St. Antony's student, says: "Max flourished in Jerusalem. People were attracted to him instantly and felt the need to take care of him. Academics sought recommendations from him for jobs or promotions. Soviet émigrés pressed manuscripts on him. He could never say no." Max traveled to the Golan Heights and the Sinai, where he was taken by the brutal power of the desert scenery. "I now realize why the Jewish God is wrathful," he said. He was despondent about Israeli politics and worried about the country's future. Says Knei-Paz: "He somehow caught the national spirit. He saw values of importance in Israel. Once he told me: 'If Israel disappears, we are all done for.'"

Still, Max was established in Greece. His periods of residence at St. Antony's grew increasingly brief and perfunctory; since Bill Deakin had retired from the college in 1968 and moved with Pussy to the south of France, Max felt less and less connected to Oxford and indeed to England. To his old friends Max rarely spoke about his life in Spetsai, but grossly exaggerated stories went around that he was moving in fashionable society, or at least café society. These tales of high life in Spetsai were received with astonishment and apparently some resentment. Hingley's reaction was by no means unusual: "He was now making new friends who—from my point of view—could hardly be said to have known the real Max at all; but they, no doubt, might feel that they had the right to say the same of me and other associates of his middle years." Hingley had seen, as I and others had, that Max had lost some of the gusto and mischievousness that were so much part of his nature before he stopped drinking. "We still met, without restraint, and always on the most affable terms," Hingley recalls, "but he was somehow just not there."

In retrospect, it seems to me that Max had gone to Greece as much for plain survival as for love of Homer. He had grown frailer than any of us realized, except for G. M., who still watched over him and worried. Max had so abused his health in his earlier years that now, in cold climates, he was subject to frightful bouts of bronchitis and flu. In Greece the sun warmed him, and he was loved and cosseted by friends. I believe he

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was never happier. His island, like Odysseus's, was "a rugged place, but a good nurse of men." There, as it turned out, he did some of his best work—for Russia.

During his Greek decade, Max translated the memoirs of Nadezhda Mandelstam and the books on Pasternak by Gladkov and Ivinskaya. He wrote his best literary essays, on Pasternak, Sinyavsky, Akhmatova, and Solzhenitsyn. He was a regular advisor on Russian books to Helen Wolff at Harcourt and Marjorie Villiers at Harvill, and he was editing a vast anthology of twentieth-century Russian poetry for Doubleday. With his friend Edward Kline he revived the long-defunct Russian-language publishing house, Chekhov Press, in New York. Under Max's editorship, the press published a number of writers who could find no home for their books at the time, either in the Soviet Union or abroad—among them Nadezhda Mandelstam, Joseph Brodsky, and Lydia Chukovskaya.

In December 1978 Max flew from Greece to New York to consult with Ed Kline on some Chekhov Press business. Within a few days Max experienced sudden, excruciating pain. A medical examination showed that he had widespread cancer: there was very little time left. I am not sure how much he was told in New York. When I went to see him at the apartment of Ed and his wife, Jill, who were caring for him, he behaved quite naturally, in spite of pain. We talked for hours as we always had of what we called "the onion"—short for the Soviet Onion. But he did not generally feel up to seeing people or to talking on the phone. He did, however, want to see Voznesensky, who was in town for readings. I brought Andrei around and the two men chatted easily for a little while. After the meeting, in the taxi, Andrei wept uncontrollably.

After Christmas, Max returned to Oxford. Anne and Richard Kindersley took charge of him then with immense tact, kindness, and love. Anne says: "He was able for a time to remain in his own rooms and to attend the hospital as an outpatient, due to the devoted care of Bohdan Ryhajlo, his college scout for seventeen years. Max knew, though he didn't choose to admit it, that his days were almost certainly numbered. He met illness by treating everything connected with it as a new experience: 'I'm learning to be the Compleat Invalid.' When, after three weeks, he went into the hospital, he found there a new and absorbing world, where the old man in the next bed provided an opportunity for studying the Oxfordshire dialect, a nurse turned out to have started life as a Byzantine scholar. He shared with his immediate neighbors the kind of casual goodfellowship found among regular pub companions.

"During the last few weeks of his life, Max lived very intensely. His pain was controlled and he was able to keep his prized independence because of the imaginative and highly skilled medical care he received in the hospice unit, Michael Sobell House, at the Churchill Hospital."

Max called the hospice that Anne describes "Chez Sobell." So many people came to have lunch, tea, and dinner with him there that he tied an engagement book around his neck with string so it would not get lost in the bedclothes. Visitors kept the refrigerator in the ward filled with champagne, caviar, pâté, and other delicacies which they consumed with Max, who had regained some of his appetite and was drinking wine. Presents arrived. The Schapiros came with smoked salmon and Ellen de Kadt with chocolate truffles; Isaiah Berlin brought a bottle of Bull's Blood wine from Hungary; Kolakowski presented his three-volume history of Marxism to Max, who kept it on display beside him.

I believe Max had had no idea of how much he was loved in England. It was a homecoming and a reconciliation. His mother and brother came to visit with him. Former students, Fellows past and present, old friends and drinking buddies he had not seen in years arrived. Friendships that had ended were resumed; the intervening years seemed to have been canceled out. One afternoon as I was sitting with him he spot-

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ted through the window a man with a halo of white hair making his way with difficulty on the path to the hospice. "It's the old Bursar," Max told me, very moved. They had not known each other well, but he had come. As always, Max found his way to his interlocutor's main interest, which in this case was India. He got the old Bursar, Peter Hailey, talking about the years he had spent as a British civil servant in that country. "I always wanted to go there," Max said. "But I suppose, I've left it a bit late."

Max's recent inquiry about resigning from the college was never mentioned. Neither, directly, was the nature and gravity of his illness; that was plainly his desire. Those who flew in from abroad professed to be on some other business as well. The Deakins came from France, Jane Joyce from Los Angeles, and Katkov from Spetsai, where he had been staying in Max's house.

I stayed in Oxford for a week, visiting Max for two or three hours every day. The Kindersleys were brilliant behind-the-scenes traffic managers, so I was assured of times alone with him. They were among our very best. We talked nonstop about "the onion" and toasted each other in wine. A little later on, after I had gone back to New York, he grew weaker and he had more trouble concentrating. Still, he and Harry Shukman spent nearly a whole afternoon working together on an article Harry was writing about Soviet Jews. The day before Max's death on March 18, 1979, as he drifted off into a coma, he asked Richard Kindersley to read him the summary of a novel by Aksyonov that had come by the morning post.

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The art and life of Alfred Stieglitz

by Gail Buckland

"I was born in Hoboken. I am an American. Photography is my passion. The search for truth my obsession." No succession of statements in the history of photography appears so simple or resounds with such significance. In it Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) conveyed an origin, a nationality, a means of expression, an ability to love, and a mission. The first sentence begs for biography. The second demands a look at the circle of American artists around Stieglitz who were trying to articulate and demonstrate a uniquely American sensibility—the painters Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, and Georgia O'Keeffe, the writers William Carlos Williams, Sherwood Anderson, Hart Crane, Paul Rosenfeld, and Waldo Frank, the photographers Paul Strand, Ansel Adams, and Eliot Porter. The third sentence calls to mind not only Stieglitz's photography but also his efforts to bring about the recognition of photography as art. The ambiguity of the last sentence ("The search for truth my obsession") and of similar remarks made during the course of a long career helped produce the myth of Stieglitz—the heroic visionary, perfectionist, sage. His search for truth did indeed lead to such contributions as the introduction of modern art (Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, Cézanne, Picabia, Rodin, Brancusi) to America, the discovery and support of major talents, and his own art. But anyone who made his voice heard as often as Stieglitz did, who allowed himself to be quoted and misquoted and contradicted himself so often, who performed so many good deeds and won the adoration of so many prominent people is naturally ripe for renewed appreciation and reappraisal.

This is not the centennial of Alfred Stieglitz's birth or any commemorative year, yet Stieglitz is currently the focus of considerable attention. The National Gallery of Art has mounted a retrospective exhibition drawn from its set of Stieglitz photographs. They have also published a magnificent catalogue tribute.[1] In addition, Sue Davidson Lowe's *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography* and William Innes Homer's *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* have been published recently.[2]

The prints, not exhibited since Stieglitz's

1 "Alfred Stieglitz," organized by Sarah Greenough and Juan Hamilton, was exhibited at the National Gallery of Art from January 30 to May 8. It will be shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from June 14 through August 14 and at the Art Institute of Chicago from October 11 through January 3, 1984. *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs and Writings,* edited by Mrs. Greenough and Mr. Hamilton, is published by the National Gallery of Art and by Callaway Editions, New York: 246 pages, $70 ($35 in paperback).

2 *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography* by Sue Davidson Lowe; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 456 pages, $25.95. *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* by William Innes Homer; Little, Brown, 180 pages, $35.

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death, and the oversized catalogue, with its sublime reproductions,[3] are the most important contributions to our understanding of Stieglitz's life and work. The exhibition covers almost the entire range of Stieglitz's photography. It offers his life at its most passionate, intellectual, and creative moments. In 1892 Stieglitz wrote: "My sole aim in making pictures is to reproduce what I see." Thirty-two years later he continued: "Could I but photograph what I *see*!" In the exhibition's catalogue Sarah Greenough argues convincingly that Stieglitz "equated 'seeing' not simply with the process of looking, but more specifically with the act of experiencing." The exhibition is divided into seven parts—Early European, Early and Later New York City, Portraits, Georgia O'Keeffe, Lake George, and Equivalents. The earliest photographs were made in 1887, the last in 1935. They show fifty years of Stieglitz's thinking about the nature of the photographic medium.

After her husband's death in 1946, Georgia O'Keeffe selected what she considered to be the finest print of every mounted photograph in her possession. If there were significant variations in cropping or other aspects of a particular image, a second print also went into the "key" set. She then offered sixteen hundred mounted photographs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Metropolitan agreed to take them, but stated that they would have to cut the mounts to fit their standard storage cases. Knowing that Stieglitz had spent hours, days, deciding on the correct relation of mounts to images, O'Keeffe rejected the arrangement outright. (To this day she dictates exactly how the pictures are to be used.) The National Gallery, however, having no photographs and hence no standard-sized photographic boxes, accepted the "key" set in 1949. Despite Stieglitz's emphatic belief that imbuing a print with life was a difficult and rare event and that no two photographic prints could be identical, duplicates were then distributed to selected museums across the United States. The "key" set remained uncatalogued until 1978, when Sarah Greenough did the work.

Alfred Stieglitz's father, a German immigrant, amassed a fortune in America in the wool import business. In 1881 he retired and took his family—wife, sister-in-law, three girls, and three boys, of whom Alfred was the eldest—to Europe for an extended holiday and in order to enroll his sons in German institutions of higher learning. In 1882 Alfred began studying engineering at the Polytechnikum and auditing classes at Berlin University, where, in the following year, he took a course in photochemistry taught by Hermann Wilhelm Vogel. Vogel, who invented orthochromatic plates (photographic emulsions sensitive to almost the full spectrum of light), gave the young Stieglitz an advanced scientific understanding of the chemical reactions in photography. Around this time Stieglitz bought his first camera. He spent the next few years following two parallel paths: the scientific study of the photographic medium and the exploration of the picture-making possibilities of the camera.

Stieglitz's enthusiasm for the camera was of course shared by many people, but his technique was exceptional. He soon started sending his prints to exhibitions and winning awards. The principal merit of the prizewinning photographs appears to have been the way they caught people in a spontaneous, spirited moment—hardly common to photographs of the time. Some have a directness and vividness of expression far removed from Victorian sentimentality.

Of the photographs on exhibition from Stieglitz's student days in Germany, the most famous example, *Sun Rays, Paula* (1889), comes as a surprise to those familiar

3 Stieglitz was meticulous about printing and matting, and equally meticulous about reproducing works of art, his own and others'. It is a rare pleasure to note that the plates in the catalogue meet Stieglitz's high standards. The original photographs were sent in batches to the printers over the course of a year so that the proofs could be matched against the originals.

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with the picture in other collections. The platinum print made in 1916 is heavier, darker, and fuller framed than later ones printed in gelatin silver. It has a metallic quality, like an early tintype. Its sobriety is disconcerting.

Sun Rays, Paula is discussed in an article by Rosalind Krauss entitled "Stieglitz-Equivalents" in *October* (Winter 1979). She cites this photograph as an example of such exact internal framing that the "cut" or "crop" ("the implied presence of the rest of the world"), which is prevalent in most photographs, is here missing. To illustrate her point she carefully analyzes the photograph. But what photograph? The reproduction accompanying her article is composed differently and is printed with much greater contrast than the one currently on exhibition. Even allowing for the printers' having taken "a bit off the edges," we are still not looking at the same picture.

Stieglitz sometimes made hundreds of prints before he deemed one worthy of mounting, discarding the rest. He described the uniqueness of his prints in a reply to James T. Soby, who in 1942 wanted examples of fine photographs to send to soldiers in the camps. His words are worth quoting at length:

> You seem to assume that a photograph is one of a dozen or hundred or maybe a million, —all prints from one negative necessarily being alike and so replaceable. But then along comes one print that really embodies something that you have to say that is subtle and elusive, something that is still a straight print, but when shown with a thousand mechanically made prints has something that the others don't have. What is it that this print has? . . . It is something born out of spirit,—and spirit is an intangible while the mechanical is tangible. . . . If what I feel about life is not in a print of mine, then I might just as well say that any machine can take a picture and turn out a print mechanically. You might get wonderful pictures as a result, but they would not contain that something called love or passion, both of which are the essentials needed to bring forth a living print—or any other living creative expression. A print lacking these elements is simply an illustration. And I have no objection to illustrations, but I am assuming that you have in mind something more than mere illustrations. Something life-giving, something inspiring. Something with a spiritual message . . .
>
> Please do not assume that I want to have prints treated as something more precious than life itself. I do not. But either you show the prints in a living condition, or they should not be shown at all. Wouldn't it be better to send around reproductions of good photographs, which retain some of the spirit of the originals, than original prints which are neither fish nor fowl?
>
> Now as far as I am concerned, I would either send you the best I am able to produce or send you nothing at all. The "good enough," which is nearly a religion in our country . . . I not only cannot subscribe to, but hate with all the hate within me . . . .

Stieglitz never made many prints at a time. If, years later, he wanted to reprint a negative and the quality paper that he loved had gone off the market, either he did not make any more prints of that negative or he attempted to find whether something *else* could be expressed through that negative to bring a new and different life to the print. This aspect of photography is more important to Stieglitz's photographs than to those of almost any other photographer.

Not all Stieglitz's early European photographs were taken during his student days. The exhibition, unfortunately, groups the work done after his return to America with the photographs of the early period, without acknowledging that he had already begun to find a voice—and something to say—in the streets of New York. When he returned to Germany in 1894 with his young and, as described by Sue Davidson Lowe, horrid new wife, he sought briefly the antithesis of the life his father had forced him to return to four years earlier. He wrote later that the rural community of Gutach offered the artist

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all he "could desire, and no tall factory buildings with their modern rectangular lines of bricks and windows to disturb, no railroads with smoky locomotives to dim the pure atmosphere." Yet what he described was exactly what he himself would seek as he entered the twentieth century—symbols of modernization and industrialization, and of American life.

Stieglitz wanted to know if there was or was not an America: "Are we only a marked-down bargain-day remnant of Europe?" In 1902 he took a shot at modernism. The picture entitled *The Flat-Iron* looms large in the exhibition. A long vertical, like the skyscraper itself, this photograph shows a slingshot of a tree aimed at the building that represented the uniquely American and the boldly conceived. Stylistically the picture offered nothing new, but the message was clear. Times were changing and new shapes and forms could be found to elucidate modern life. This was the year Stieglitz founded the Photo-Secession and produced the first issue of *Camera Work,* published in early 1903. The twentieth century was the machine age, and photography was the art of the machine. Stieglitz was determined to make it the art of America and to place his country in the forefront of pictorial photography. He succeeded.

In the 1890s in Vienna, London, and Paris, photographers had "seceded" from the institutions that dictated what photographs would be exhibited where and when. These individuals wanted freedom from making the sharpest, most technically correct salon art. They were part of the fin de siècle aesthetic of mystery and mood and looked to Japanese painting as a guide to "spiritual" composition. They wanted to be recognized as artists, and they manipulated their prints and negatives. The Americans that Stieglitz championed were closely allied to them. Jonathan Green in his book *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology* described the general attitude:

> The reality that lay before the camera's lens was not a poetic enough subject. If the camera was to produce art, it must be freed from the tyranny of the visible world. The photographer could become an expressive artist only by reshaping the sharp, optically corrected image, or by consciously arranging in front of the lens the accepted symbols and devices of the world of feeling.

In retrospect it is remarkable that Stieglitz would champion this cause. His own photography did not go in this direction. But he often spoke approvingly of letting photographers go to their own photographic hell as long as they went there with all the conviction and spirit they could muster. His own efforts at editing magazines, arranging exhibitions, and "discovering photographers and fighting for them" were, as he explained, attempts to "establish for myself an America in which I could breathe as a free man." His most creative efforts—aside from his own photographs—were directed toward establishing environments in which people, himself included, could work and develop.

In Sarah Greenough's essay, she explains that although other Photo-Secessionists "cultivated an oblique, suggestive art, employing subjects which were neither geographically, temporally, nor physically specific," Stieglitz's pictures of New York City were "definite and explicit." Misty landscapes and "ethereal, virginal women" had no place in Stieglitz's modern metropolis. Unfortunately, Miss Greenough did not include, in the exhibition or the book, a thorough survey of these seminal pictures of Manhattan taken between 1902 and 1910. To see the sixteen photographs hung together—a concurrent and complementary exhibition at the Lunn Gallery in Washington, D.C., offered one the chance—is to witness Stieglitz arriving at a new definition of self and society.

By 1911 Stieglitz had been running the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (291) for six years. In addition to showing Gertrude Kasebier, Clarence White, Edward Steichen, and the other Photo-Secessionists, he exhibited Matisse, Rodin, Dove, Hartley, Marin, Max Weber, and Cézanne. He recognized that photographers who wished

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to be regarded as artists, to exhibit in museums, and to have their work collected would have to face the same questions asked of modern painters and sculptors. They would have to familiarize themselves with radically new work. Greenough argues it was Cubism and specifically Picasso that had the greatest effect on Stieglitz's understanding of "the idea of photography" in the 1910s. The other Photo-Secessionists' refusal to change their style in light of these new movements and their unwillingness to support Stieglitz's shift to showing modern art at 291 and in *Camera Work* led to a severing of relations. In 1913 Stieglitz complained that they had "not developed mentally but have stood still during the past six or seven years," and, since he claimed 291 was "devoted to ideas," he could no longer exhibit their work.

In *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession*, William Innes Homer does little to extend our appreciation of the pictures of the Photo-Secessionists or to encourage us to care about them. (We may note that it is Atget, the Photo-Secessionists' contempoary, who is in favor in photographic circles these days.) He does give a competent overview of the precedents in European photography (although he is wrong to say there was no amateur photography before the mid-1880s). And some of the facts are interesting: for example, during the 1905-06 season of 291, fifteen thousand people visited the gallery, and some sixty-one prints were sold—for a total of $2,797.49. But his biographies of the main participants add little new information, except in the cases of Anne Brigman and George Seeley.

What we need is a careful analysis of individual artists of this movement to see whether there is not something more substantial here than the mists, crystal balls, flowing dresses, and shadowy backgrounds have led us to believe. The finest discourse in this direction is by Mike Weaver, professor of American Literature at Oxford University and an authority on William Carlos Williams. In a short catalogue published in 1982 by the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain marking the centenary of the birth of Alvin Langdon Coburn (whose photographs were recently seen at the International Center of Photography in New York City), Mr. Weaver tells us that Coburn, "having made his contribution to the medium in the period 1900-1914, realized that the endless striving to keep up with changes in sensibility and technology would impair the essentially religious nature of his own individuality." We learn that for him the quest for beauty and the study of comparative religion were inseparable. Mr. Weaver tells us precisely which authors Coburn read (something Sue Davidson Lowe fails to do for Stieglitz). It turns out that Henry James, Arthur Symons, and Edward Carpenter were among the most influential figures in his life. James, for example, commissioned him to do the frontispieces of the American editions of his novels and carefully instructed him as to "types."

Arthur Wesley Dow, the foremost art teacher in America, whose foundation course was taken by both Max Weber and Georgia O'Keeffe, accompanied Coburn to the Grand Canyon in 1911. Dow taught printmaking in the Japanese tradition and thought the key elements of composition to be line, notan (dark and light as opposed to chiaroscuro), and color. Mr. Weaver writes:

> The result of this new art of spacing was a photographic design that was eccentric—off-centre—and triangular. The oblique and the elliptical were favoured because (it was claimed) Hokusai believed that all shapes in the universe were fundamentally triangular or round. The four-square or frontal approach to be taken later by Walker Evans was rejected in favour of the indirect or oblique angle preferred by Henry James as well as the Japanese.

Through Mr. Weaver's search for the underlying significance of Coburn's imagery, we begin to learn something of the common concerns of the other Photo-Secessionists, such as Clarence White and Gertrude Kasebier, and the basis of their philo-

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sophical and aesthetic goals. What appears to be unique with Coburn is his knowledge of the seventeenth-century verbal-pictorial art of the West. In a lecture given in London last year, Mr. Weaver showed slides of pages of texts from Coburn's library that show that there was a hieroglyphic key to uncovering the meaning of his photographs. Arches, domes, castles, portals—all had symbolic significance that, when the images were organized, could approach the metaphysical truth that Coburn sought not only in his photography but in every aspect of his life. This obviously appealed to Stieglitz in the first decade of this century, when he supported Coburn and the others who were following Maeterlinck's dictate: "Emotions gain in intensity by not being expressed openly, absence can mean presence . . . ."

Openness, clarity of vision, photography in its purest sense—these became Stieglitz's objectives as he diverged from the Photo-Secessionists. He liked to say his works were devoid of "isms," that unless "one has *eyes* and *sees,* they won't be seen." But he didn't have to seek out the extraordinary. He needed only to look at the people and things that were integral to his life, to look more consciously, more creatively, and more profoundly than anyone had looked at anything before. Stieglitz asks us to share only his most vital concerns.

His portrait of O'Keeffe, composed of hundreds of studies, is profoundly poetic. Her slender, full-breasted body, intelligent, enigmatic face, and graceful movements make her an ideal model. Every part of her that he photographed year in and year out shows the energy of the whole being. Sue Davidson Lowe writes:

> Alfred's happiness with Georgia was transcendent. Beyond shared insights and attitudes, beyond matching impulses of creativity, passion for work, and insistence on careful craftsmanship, beyond the steps each took toward self-revelation, followed by declarations to rights of privacy, there was for both Georgia and Alfred an erotic tension that heightened and informed everything they did together.

Stieglitz used excrutiatingly long exposures—three or four minutes—for his portraits. Julia Margaret Cameron had used long exposures in the nineteenth century to evoke mental energy. Stieglitz used them to suggest fluidity; he sought to work with time rather than against it. This, the flatness of the lighting, the richness of his platinum and palladium prints, and the carefully chosen backgrounds make all his portraits—not just those of O'Keeffe—subdued and dignified. Yet the reason they succeed—they fill the viewer with the sitter's presence—is ultimately mysterious. One knows only that it has something to do with form, texture, and light, and with concentration on the part of both artist and subject.

The composite portrait of O'Keeffe is neither all Stieglitz nor all O'Keeffe. She was a willing accomplice; he a patient observer. In 1978 the Metropolitan Museum of Art filled a small room with these studies, carefully chosen by Weston Naef, and produced a flawless exhibition. In it we saw O'Keeffe in her first eye-to-eye encounters with Stieglitz, tentative, young; again in the full blossoming of womanhood; then as the strong, decisive artist; the wife who smiles knowingly at her husband; and the individual who needs to move on. This chronicle has never been more satisfactorily shown, and the O'Keeffe group in the present exhibition does not build in tension as the earlier one did. There are snapshots, never before seen, of O'Keeffe painting and pruning, but there is no cohesiveness in the curators' choice.

Mrs. Lowe tells us that from the age of nine until the age of eighty-two Stieglitz missed only eleven summers at Lake George—six while a student in Germany, one for a honeymoon, and four for trips to Europe. Even when O'Keeffe started spending summers in the Southwest, he never joined her. Lake George as a retreat was always counterpoised with New York, and the pictures Stieglitz made there provided an important balance both for the man and the artist. Some strong pictures, such as *Apples and Gable, Lake George* (1922), are not in-

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cluded in the exhibition, however. In Bram Dijkstra's *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams* we read of the sentiment that informed this picture and others. Williams articulated it best: "Nothing more wonderful than to see the pears attached by their stems to the trees. Earth, trunk, branch, twig and the fruit: a circle soon to be completed when the pear falls . . . the only means [we have to give value to life] is to recognize it with the imagination and name it."

The Lake George pictures are normally neither Cubist-inspired nor abstractions. It is through the imagination that these quietist pictures live. Whether long underwear hanging on the line, or halos of light circling a young girl's ankles, the details in them translated through the imagination take on universal significance. Dijkstra explains:

> The members of the Stieglitz group [writers and painters] argued that because the intuitive contact between humanity and his native soil had been rooted out of the American consciousness, the artist who wished to be truly American would have to make a conscious effort to re-establish that contact. This could be done only by going back to the very basis of nature, the object. All concrete forms, natural as well as man-made, should be seen in terms of their relationship to the artist, and the artist should establish from the things about him the meaning of his own existence. By transmitting what he saw as accurately as possible in terms of his individual vision, he would then be able to inculcate an awareness of the universal emotions underlying the materials of his environment to his fellow Americans, while yet reflecting the specific elements of his local consciousness.
>
> The Stieglitz group was quite insistent that in advocating this return to a direct attention for the position of the object as such within nature it reestablished a concept of objective realism which had nothing to do with the familiar romantic concept of a return to nature. Rather, they felt, they were advocating an attitude which, it is true, had been lost through the development of industrialism, but which had none of the vague generalized sentimentality which guided the response of a city-bred person taking a trip out into the country and heaving sighs over the exquisite beauty of it all. Indeed, what they were advocating was the obverse of escapism, an attention only to *things as they are.*

Paul Strand, Charles Sheeler, Paul Outerbridge, Ralph Steiner, Karl Struss, Paul Haviland, and Alvin Langdon Coburn were all consciously isolating details and employing lessons learned from Cubism in their photographs, simultaneously and prior to Stieglitz's most modern expressions, his "Through My Window" and "Equivalent" series dating from 1922-1935. In the skyscraper photographs a brilliant technique gives definition to the subject. The question the photographs posed was whether the image was, in Stieglitz's words, a reality "so subtle that it becomes more real than reality," or the thing *as it is.* It is a uniquely photographic dichotomy.

The buildings seen through the windows of Stieglitz's last gallery (An American Place) and of his apartment at the Shelton Hotel yield rectangles and squares piled high, strong graphic images employing large areas of black and white yet very real and specific. They show brick upon brick, the cranes and scaffolds helping them go higher and higher. As densely packed as a microchip, this is the city of hide and seek. It is also man making mountains, asking God to yield his province.

In the skyscraper photographs Stieglitz is high up looking across and looking down. In the "Equivalents" he has his feet firmly on the ground and looks to the heavens. The present exhibition permits a full savoring. We are able to confront and understand this seminal work better than at any previous time. The "Equivalents" are not easy to consider, but once the viewer recognizes the freedom with which Stieglitz approaches his subject, the liberation from all rules and constructs is euphoric. He gives us the uni-

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verse in its formative stages—whirling masses of gasses and vapors before gravity tells us what is top and what is bottom. In the "Equivalents," Stieglitz wanted to show everything he had learned about life and art. He wanted people to look at the pictures and hear music, he wanted the forms to equate to his deepest feelings. In the article cited previously, Rosalind Krauss discussed the *risk* involved in making and exhibiting these studies, failure, naturally, being seen as fraudulence:

> *Relationship* cannot mean anything here that has much to do with its conventional meaning within the traditional arts. Just as a readymade stakes everything that it might signify on the single gesture of its recontextualization and placement, so these images, which come to us as unanalyzable wholes, stake everything on the single act of cutting out—the gesture that makes them by cutting . . . .
>
> In their verticality the clouds echo or double the initial meaning of the cut, or rather, each reinforces and doubles the other. For both are involved in displaying the world only by means of an image that is radically cut loose from its moorings, an image that is about being unmoored.

What Miss Krauss's thesis leaves out is that in almost every "Equivalent" the sun is present—perfectly white and circular or hidden behind the clouds, a source of understated illumination. Emotionally we are attracted to this constant light-giving body, symbolic here of the soul. Stieglitz had the whole sky to select from. He did not have to include this heavenly, life-sustaining star when it was not of critical importance. Once again, as with the example of the fruit on the limb, it is William Carlos Williams whose thought approximates Stieglitz's most closely. More than ten years after the last "Equivalent," he wrote the poem entitled *The Clouds,* of which these are the final stanzas:

> Thus each
> is valued by what he carries and that is his soul
> —diminishing the bins by that much
> unless replenished.
>
> It is that which is the brotherhood:
> the old life, treasured. But if they live?
> What then?
>
> The clouds remain
> —the disordered heavens, ragged, ripped by winds
> or dormant, a caligraphy of scaly dragons and bright moths,
> of straining thought, bulbous or smooth,
> ornate, the flesh itself (in which
> the poet foretells his own death); convoluted, lunging upon
> a pismire, a conflagration, a . . . . . .

Sue Davidson Lowe in her memoir/biography tells us much more than we ever wanted to know about her great-uncle Alfred Stieglitz, but she also gives us much to be grateful for. Her dedication through many years of interviewing and of reading correspondence has produced the most thorough account of Stieglitz's life to date. But, because Georgia O'Keeffe refused access to the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe letters at Princeton's Beinecke Library and permission to quote from unpublished Stieglitz material, she must often leave the reader unconvinced of her conclusions. That by the last page we feel somewhat like a supersaturated solution is the result of our being offered too many incidental facts. We start to get bored with Alfred, something that I believe did not happen frequently in real life. Being herself a member of the Stieglitz clan, she pays great attention to the family members, though they rarely merit it. And, except for O'Keeffe, the intellectual weight of Stieglitz's friends is not realized fully enough to establish the interplay of ideas that was so central to his life.

In the introduction to her book, Mrs. Lowe writes: "It is my hope that I have succeeded in humanizing Uncle Al, whom I loved but did not idolize. He was a cantankerous, inspired, whimsical, candid, insightful, naughty, sweet, dynamic, and outra-

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geous man." This effort on the part of present-day writers not to "idolize" Stieglitz is a response to a contrary mode which goes all the way back to the 1914-15 issue of *Camera Work* on the theme "What is 291?" to the book *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* the seventieth-birthday tribute to him published in 1934, and to the writings of Dorothy Norman, especially her 1973 monograph titled *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer.* It is to Mrs. Lowe's credit that she has now emerged as an authoritative source for the bits and pieces of his life and has shown complete disregard for his argument that his home life was off limits by virtue of irrelevancy. She has also done a superb job putting together the chronology of his life, a bibliography, a list of exhibitions he organized from 1902 to 1946, and of the photographic equipment he used.

Mrs. Lowe highlights her great-uncle's infatuation with the childlike Dorothy Norman, who adored him from the time of their first encounter through the years of daily contact at An American Place. Their exact relationship is never spelled out but their intimacy is apparent. It appears that then, as now, O'Keeffe wanted none of it. The Stieglitz photographs of Norman are central to his career. That not one appears in the present exhibition raises questions as to how much control O'Keeffe had over the selection and whether the curators, perhaps especially Juan Hamilton, her close friend, thought their inclusion would still be an irritant. The curators' argument that Norman's portraits did not fit any category of the exhibition is unconvincing.

The omission is especially unfortunate as these works refer to the "Equivalents" from the same period. Stieglitz cuts out portions of her face, and even the texture of the skin approaches that of the amorphous clouds. The Norman portraits have a softness and pliability that is diametrically opposed to O'Keeffe's hard-edged intelligence. We learn in the biography that in the 1930s Stieglitz "confessed to having once considered making a motion picture to reveal the whole emotional range of a woman's life through alternating close-ups of her nude body with footage of clouds in motion." It is far more likely that the woman would have been Norman, who then had both the time and inclination to sit for him, than O'Keeffe.

There are many other marvelous revelations in the book, and some fine and funny family photographs. But ultimately Mrs. Lowe's failure to understand Stieglitz's photography diminishes her contribution. A statement such as the one describing his summer at Lake George in 1930—"He had almost no work to show: a few cloud prints, some portrait shots of Kalonyme and Zoler, some candids of Peggy and Sue"—makes the reader feel that her attempts to "humanize" him have stripped him of his greatness both as an artist and as a leader in the art world.

Georgia O'Keeffe once wrote: "I believe it was the work that kept me with him—though I loved him as a human being." And it is the work that keeps each generation caring about Stieglitz. Neither his words nor his deeds would have rung true had there not also been the great photographic experiments—the far-reaching works of art that stand at the center of Stieglitz's being.

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Museums
by Hortense Calisher

Each time I see the little Temple of Dendur crouching behind its view of the park as if someone had given it A-framed spectacles with which to view the twentieth century, I think of the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian wing when I was a child—those long, swarthy corridors down which one mummy-case after another invited the ten-year-old toward a vista of what the ages were, what death might be, and what reflection could be. As I walked on into other wings an idea came on slowly, happily repeatable from tour to tour, persuading me by the vast succession of almost similar objects presented, each identified only by its tiny inscripted card. I came to feel there was a repetition at the core of it all, coiling in each rescued treasure and fluttering in each viewer, uniting the two of us from the very bottoms of time and art.

That lure was what pulled one along the endless aisles of Greek and Roman amphorae. These were neither entirely beautiful nor boring; they were inevitable. No wonder that in Latin class the strophes at times appeared to succeed themselves on the page in tones of henna and black, and a flattening of the shoulders into bas-relief seemed to help one construe.

Meanwhile, down in the basement of that Met were ghastly white salons devoted to the plaster cast, all chalk figures from antiquity, whose muscles had a pale dapple that had never been flesh. The fig leaves looked thick and uncomfortable. Yet each time I came I paid these emperors and aediles a duty-call. Often there were other earnest responsives like me. We gave each other humbled, covert glances of recognition. We were the sort who would look at anything. However, something was grumbling in me, irritably. One day I found myself alone, trundling meekly, eyes in the receptive position. Suddenly I stopped, at no figure in particular. Inner cramp forced a word from my lips. "Terrible." An immense whelm of satisfaction followed. I had acquired taste. And all by myself.

I am still acquiring it, if in reverse. These days, in the added wings of old museums, in the new museums reincarnated after a short but happy life, I am seeing all the nerves of acquisition exposed, in both their public networks and their private, as well as in the lumpy exhibitionism which can come of the two hand-in-hand—in styles ranging from Neo-Fund-raising Kinetic to Bequest Vernissage. Meanwhile I have learned that the museum building itself is an artifact whose first duty is to proclaim "Looka me!"

Once inside, I am plied with arrangements so artful that the subtle stealth of the displaying talent all but supersedes the objects on display. I learn to roll with the punches when the cabinetwork surrounding a "Chinese" garden seems to me more Freddie the decorator executing an Oriental take-out for a favored *Town & Country* client. I can expect that even without walkie-talkie, the voice of the curator, heard

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everywhere in this land, will manage me from gallery to gallery, pointing me toward artistic stances as the balletmaster once pointed my foot.

Since I go to visual art in part for what cannot be expressed in words, I get cross when I am met by walls gone to explanatory placard—but that may be an occupational disorder. Contrarily, since I am excited by crowds, I don't in the least mind pouring through the halls like a pebble in gravy, though I must keep recalling why I am doing it—perhaps because a single girdle of Akhenaton, or those fifty Ming horsemen, may never come my way again. And I have five and a half seconds to look at them.

Finally, I can go to a museum in the surety that even if I get there so early on an off day that I am literally alone with art and the masterpiece (or even with some small "unknown" I have found for myself), I can expect that in some sly way reverie will be broached; that the admittedly old-fashioned inner silence which museums used to provide will somehow be smirched—that in fact everything which might be left to dream on has somehow been framed.

Then, since I have learned so much, why am I beginning to be wary of going to a museum, of even the idea of one, once a concept so sacrosanct as to be barely phrasable? The answer is simple: because I have learned so much.

What we seem to be being taught primarily is mass accumulation, not the least of the goals being an appreciation of how many of us in round numbers are absorbing the huge pills of art-prescriptive. To wander alone toward art is felt to be a kind of withdrawal psychologically, never in our society too loudly approved. But the Sunday crowds at the Met are as socially proper as church.

If you scorn these for the Saturday afternoon gallery stalk you are merely more "in," meeting not only friends of the same persuasion and education but artists on the prowl as well, and finally—the patrons themselves. All of us. For from opening-day on it is assumed that each and every one of us is making the rounds to achieve a kind of possession, if not actually to acquire, then to obtain what even the penniless may own and often do in large quantity—a fix not only on the artist's "image," but on his or her status. I myself have for years saved the illustrated opening-day cards of shows to which I have been bidden, and some to which I have not. They are an interesting if wistful record, part personal and even romantic, like the dance-cards of yore, but also a spotty replay of art-fashion. I own a lot of that. I have accumulated it.

Now, much of this is no more than what must have gone on at the fringes of art eternally. Why not an honorable print of the painting one cannot have, though these are in turn different from prints made by its maker? Or collect those if able, or the photograph, all now valuable and in time a demonstration not only of one's taste but one's perspicacity. A long word, but in any stance on art these days it enters in.

Collecting is of course in the human spirit, and does not attach only to "pure" art. Its great other side is evinced in the domestic house, all the way from the bibelots and ormolu of the château to the ivory elephants which used to march the Teddy Roosevelt-era mantel, even on to the pink-china donkeys and ceramic Mexican sombreros which housewives of the nineteen-forties could amass at the dimestore, not knowing to what these or their ilk might someday aspire.

As time's passage creates both scarcity and sociology it may lead even to a museum of sorts for such as these—*vide,* the collection of giraffes (identical except as to size, labeled *poss. Copenhagen, period unknown,* and owned by a Mrs. Longnecker) which I saw in the consciously prototype "Museum Room" [sic] of the large Senior Citizens Center in Port Charlotte, Florida. I am not sure it was the lady's sense of humor that alone was being applauded. Where the habits of success are concerned, my countrymen quickly lose their sense of self-parody. Rather, like many another more exalted patron, this connoisseur of possibly porcelain replicas of the *Giraffidae*—a taste no

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doubt formed by family heraldry—had attained the privilege of a personal statement about her life and tastes, via the museum available to her.

One of the main obtrusives in many a modern U.S.A. museum is the omnipresence of the private collection, so that walking its halls one may seem to be at one of those benefit parties with too many hostesses. Our mistake, of course, grown on us over years of free museum viewing, is ever to have thought of those high marble cenotaphs as public. By and large, both their inception and growth have been de facto through the private donor. There has always been a social relish to the private collection. Even now we feel on a certain safe ground, perhaps, when in those parts of a museum which are declaratively personal. Once these were houses given over entire, like the Frick; nowadays they may be Hirshhorns, yet in them we still know where we are; they are what one man or woman liked or chose to be known as a discerner of, with perhaps some help—and could afford to buy. Death and taxes have since fixed their boundaries, in terms of the original taste.

We can also return to such collections with fair certainty that we may find the same exhibit still there. In the modern museum, that privilege of revisiting (once in itself the great offering at the core of even the most various) comes to seem like the special benevolence of a known friend, whose idiosyncrasies one may follow almost tenderly: what moved the steel mogul toward the enamels of Limousin, or the real estate tycoon toward these paintings of empty space? Meanwhile the old-style "permanent collection," more or less familiarly on unshifted display, becomes a rarity.

In that first Metropolitan childhood which so haunts me, often the august name of a gallery-giver was somewhere on high, in pale-cut letters superimposed on the wall's dusty velvet or incised over a stone portal. But the real immortality lay in those small identity cards which were black-printed on a buff which aged to dirty tan—the unforgettable color of Loan or Gift. From glass case to sidewall these led on like a trail of breadcrumbs, in and out of the bewitched forestries of art. By the time I heard anecdotes of J. P. Morgan's huge nose I already saw him as a large urn of *famille rose* or *verte,* behind him many other constituencies, even to those other *objets de vertu,* books. In fact many of the names on the cards—Havemeyer, Lenox—chimed with uncertain, or, rather inclusive provenance, as to whether I hadn't met them in both libraries and galleries, and this instructed too. I grew to recognize not only what one or the other had had a special yearning for, but also, by the number of cards, who might have had more money than most, or more generosity. As I learned how some had had their cultural aides-de-camp, I could play games with the results before me, imagining an imperious "Sorry, Duveen, I have to have it," or a weakish, "Berenson, do you really think I must?"

Meanwhile, all along the trail I grew to distinguish that other elegance, refined not by the market alone, of those who had merely bequeathed what they had had. I still get a twinge returning me to knee-socks when I see the card of a Miss Adeline (or was it Adelaide?) De Groot. What a reverse chic those cards could perform, and to us out front what a soothing one, for whether the object came from patroon, patrician, or mere patron, and in spite of whatever jockeying might have gone on behind the scenes to get it there, the cards, varying only with the information, were all much of the same meager size and in the same shabby-genteel print—as if you the viewer had after all some obligation to find out for yourself, or some knowledge of these objects and even perhaps of their owners. The age of proud unassertion—I could not begin to know how I would one day long for it.

In the heyday of my later viewing youth, which took place mostly at "The Modern," (not yet called MOMA) and at all the other outcroppings which were then spawning all the way to East Tenth Street, the artist was still above the patron. It was an age of fierce

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artists urged on by fierce happenings both in art and in the world at large, and the concepts that were raging belonged to *them.* These they shared directly with us. The curator's great metier was still in knowledgeable acquiring, and only secondarily in the practice of a then still discreet installation, analogous to what literary people used to call the disappearing style.

At one extreme there might be *Guernica,* for which one could do little except find an appropriate space and stand back. At the other, pictures were merely "hung well," the subtleties of which were often explained to me, even by painters, as an underlying discipline I could learn to see—which might have warned me, and them. In the middle somewhere were the "statements" (often indeed instructive or with a distinct beauty of logic) which could be made by the juxtaposition of art-objects or of artists, or by showing a life-work in progression or segment, or by directly immersing the viewer, as in a small room of close-hung Rothkos, or even by selectively showing the emotions of one or more artists, the despairs of a Munch pitted against a Nolde, the special pornographies of a Picasso, the toy-world of a Calder at Christmastime. The thematics did grow ever more agile and loose; I suppose one gets tired of merely presenting well. Or wishes to join the artist. But where there was a sense of loud-voiced intermediary between the viewer and art, it was likely to be the artist's still.

The change came first in the museum-at-large, and, as in so many other areas, universal education has had a lot to do with it. Everybody is now an elite; there have to be outlets. The museum now became a social organism as never before: MOMA on a Sunday afternoon—combined dating-hall, movies, garden restaurant, geriatric tea-break, and walking tour for the intellectual couple and their piggyback child. One has to do something about the crowds, and the response of our country, where peaceable, is like any other's—to sell them something, in a shop or not. Museums were learning to do both, but as new ones formed, the first great selling, coincidental with the rise of the manipulative architect, was that of the museum itself—which now much meant the building *per se.*

To take our buildings to be in essence ourselves, or to mistake them for it, is again nothing new. Once it was Chartres. The Beaubourg, if not religion tongue-in-cheek, is an agnostic response. Whatever, the painters who first protested Frank Lloyd Wright's big prow on Eighty-ninth Street—as vying with the whole principle of rectangular painting when hung—were prescient, if only with a side-issue. For a long time that museum itself would be its own major attraction, and even later on, only the sculptors, a David Smith or a Rickey, could seem to make it step back. Visually, that is. Only in its accommodating basement, lent out to poets and music, is it merely a building at last.

The second huge selling would come from the curators. Every art has its entrepreneurs, and artists have needed them. A few near-Ruskins tower unique, making their own bid for art in the process. The rest become, if only for a moment, more influential in setting the trends than the artists themselves, often also serving as the link between money—private, commercial, or national—and the art world. To the outsider both the powerful museum curator and the ambitious fledglings may appear to be attempting all three functions, but perhaps the greatest competitive change has occurred in the art of acquisitioning.

Here I think of the curator I once sat next to for some days on jury duty, while the two of us waited vainly to be picked by attorneys who plainly wanted no professional intelligencers of any kind. Thinking meanwhile to amuse, I told him how one day, waiting for a friend in that MOMA gallery where typewriters on pedestals, desk-lamps and toilet-bowl cleaners were earmarked for notable design, I saw in a glass a cookie-cutter identical to my own. A hollow globe of fretted tin, which when rolled on the dough produces rapidly, it does have that ingenious

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charm which more than cooks applaud. The catch was that whereas MOMA had provenanced its old worn one as American, grouping it with other praiseworthy articles of an earlier native design, mine, as old, but well kept like all my husband's inherited Iowa farm articles, says cleanly, Made In Germany. Since my jury-neighbor's expressed interest was far afield—Coptic—I had thought I could safely expect a laugh. Instead, quite solemnly he took out his card. "Should you and your husband ever wish to make us a bequest, we should be very happy." "But, but—" I quavered back, "it's only a—" A cookie-cutter. And not what it's cracked up to be. He smiled, a fishy gleam. "Nevertheless—we'd like to have it." I took a second look at his card. Of course they would. MOMA had enshrined it. He was from the Cooper-Hewitt.

A big part of a curator's responsibility may now be to acquire the collector, who may either already own a coveted collection or can be led to plug up some gap in the museum's *omnium gatherum*. All this can take time on both sides. Ten or so years ago a couple blew into New York on a slick of oil, bought an expensive apartment with all its contents (no time for choice, as the wife explained to me, and seemingly no regrets), and embarked on that social life, largely made up of benefit causes, which is open to the new. But though charitable, religious, or political causes have their place, Maecenas in the end wants to be seen laying up treasures for this world, and, finally, in these democratic days, for us all. A museum will allow him to do both.

It is best to pick a specialty to work toward. This couple not surprisingly chose nineteenth-century American painting, the current rage and thumpingly safe. If Thomas Coles and Asher Durands are not always around or yet to be ventured on, a diet of runners-up can still make for a culturally recognizable drawing room, at least where this pair was making its stand. Which was not in Vence or Vallauris or the wilder shores of art-oriented rich Rio, but in the U.S., at a time when art-lovers who were in oil were encouraged to act patriotically as well. Meanwhile the locks, stocks, and barrels originally bought in one swoop are changing, ever being refined, often with the friendly assistance of curators from the museum the couple now feels closest to. So far, their reciprocal gifts haven't been much, but museums can afford to wait, not the least for a proper collection to be formed.

Among the many variants of such couples and the rivalries between them, ours is one of the more likable. She has studied, becoming the kind of domestic authority-in-a-field which women of leisure and means can aspire to, has a busy buying life to complement her husband's financial one, and, in the evening, though her attractions would permit more leeway, affects those pleated, quasi-antique chitons which thicken the figure but indicate both art seriousness and the expense one has been put to. She was once nervous in the company of those who dress or furnish individualistically; now she is impatient with them, as being radicals against the real tide. Within her own field she and her husband now buy widely, ever discarding. One learns that the smart collector on the way up is not sentimental—is even rather a-possessive—and never really cherishes. Once she may have thought she could afford to love art for itself alone, but this is no longer really practicable. Still, there are compensatory sensations; recently a curator from one of the great museums of the world helped her "hang" her new living-room drapes. As for her husband, he is no philistine. He knows that art is more than money. Perhaps he sums things best: "I want the art I own to express *me*. I can't get over—how it does."

What has happened to museums lately is precisely that. The patrons are expressing themselves. They always have, of course, else why does one generation take it for granted that the art of any age must house itself in railroad-baron Renaissance, and the next (as it first espouses modern art, then moves it from the Village to the convenient east-Seventies as the Whitney did), quarter itself

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in river-tunnel slate and a magniloquently serviceable gray against which the most avant-garde looks faintly arriviste?

But this time round, the patrons are half-addressing, even courting, us plebes. Which can make for some very peculiarly mixed circuses and other divertimenti, designed toward somebody's idea of hoi polloi. Take the new Michael Rockefeller wing at the Met. All museums are eventually half anthropology but this garnering of the primitive seems to me premature. Perhaps we never entirely recover from how they "saved" the Elgin Marbles. It is known of course that one can no longer leave Indonesian "art" to the mercy of the Indonesians. Yet such rescues seem more pious when performed on home ground and under a more clear-eyed ethic, as, say, with the extraordinary rooms devoted to the Indians of the Northwest at the Museum of Anthropology of the University of British Columbia at Vancouver, where the environment of water and hill is at the straightforward window-wall, the information is stowed unobtrusively in catalogues on lecterns, and a smashing pair of Indian students may be at the reception desk.

Analogously, the African sector of the Met's new wing does better, what with its big incidence of black audience, inspiriting to watch. Presiding over the whole wing, however, is a design hauteur which makes one uneasy, vying as it does with these vulnerable objects to make one quality in them clearest of all—that however we catalogue to ourselves their beauty, significance, or innocence, to their originators they meant something beyond that catalogue. The high, zoo smell of removal, if not rape, is everywhere. And what is that white sheeting drooping from the skylights like bedding flung tenement style over the terrace rail of a Fifth Avenue flat? Later, one explainer tells me that New Guinea et al. wood has been found to need jungle shadow. Ah, yes.

Never you mind, if it's windows on the world you must have, seek out the one set into a street-level wall of the new Asia House exactly as picture-windows are built into ranchhouses on corner lots, and here not only introducing an oval otherwise unrelated to the interior but giving a prime view of the apartment house opposite and one tenant's line-up of bulbous flowerpots. So remarkably does the whole decor straddle that one feels there may be a certain ethic behind it. For though the museum's exterior is of a henna marble (surely in tribute to its patron street and all our brownstone memories) inside one is almost bowled over by that hipshotten brow of stucco-paste over the desk where the populace is received. Carpets and wallpaint too are commonplace and, although the place is empty—on a Sunday!—already the worse for wear. Against the three other slate-dark walls, and under tracklights so recessed as to be a contradiction in terms, the dim dust-colored Bodhisattvas and their like are muted almost to the invisible, whether for their welfare or for a trendy basement effect, is not clear. Natural light, such as it is—that whitish city light which falls on the "modernized," and schoolhouse pastel in the restrooms—that's for us.

In the center, though, is that Rockefeller collection, a lady's, of relatively small oriental objects stored almost femininely in a few cases. For the viewer it is like gazing into a jewel box, though these are not jewels. National treasures, not our nation's of course, but long shut away to all but private view and now restored to us, they make us feel, with modesty on both sides, the true inheritors. I do believe that this part of the museum is for both parties. Quiet. Close in, not too dispersed for its own display. Even luxe. The true patron is here, and the true populace. Of course what it reminds me of is the choice little old Asia House. I cannot get over it.

So say it—what the mixed-up, adulterated ethic of this place and the excrescences of that other one are telling you. While we plebes were getting educated, the patrons, out of guilt, misplaced democracy, or the wrong guides, have been vulgarizing themselves. I think of all the other evidences.

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Tactlessly jazzed-up displays addressed to "the black heritage"—by white curatorship. Sleazy jet-set or department-store galas not worthy to be staged in those once-holy museum halls, or in any which set themselves up as arbiters of taste. Collectors selling graceless replicas of the work of artists supposedly in their guardianship. I wish they would all go back to being elite.

As we leave Asia House I note there are eight floors. I ask the guard what's upstairs above this so far meager collection. The three top ones he says, are for administration. And for entertaining.

Of course. They will be acquiring. For all the floors in between.

I go home thinking of that, and of how, as floor by floor the personal collections whelm the permanent ones, our museums begin to remind me of mortuaries. It is then—suddenly, of course—that inspiration strikes.

That's always been a bum metaphor. Since we creative people are always being asked how inspiration feels, I'll tell you that when mine do come, which is not often, it's no blinding glow but a matter of seeing a relationship between what it almost gives you the shivers to place cheek by jowl. This one, for instance. It includes my memory of the few behind-doors museum offices I have seen. They are usually very serene architecturally, even neuter. Cool places, with perhaps a little pile of textiles in a corner, archaic ones of course. On the desk perhaps one pure object, selected out to clear the curatorial eye. Around some corner will be the palettes and brushes, tints and fluids of the restoring studios, and around another, above those deeper vaults we never question, are the administrative offices, always changing wings or clearing them, consigning the ages themselves to light or dark—and always with a better blueprint somewhere, a bigger one.

But I now see one thing more. I see that couple I know—in their final apotheosis. Acquired at last.

I say—let our conservators learn embalming. Then, oh then, what problems might we and they not solve, of funding and acquisition together, taste and countertaste, patron and plebe, all at once. I must not let imagination rush on. Except to note that patrons of course would pay for prime space in ascending order, and extra for preferred or special designs for the catafalque itself. Tithe-paying plebes—for we will get there, buddy—might have to take their chances by lottery or group sponsorship. In this way a broad live audience, and one of enlightened art-sympathy, might be assured. From time to time there might have to be—whisper it—a discreet de-acquisitioning. Yet any patron so enshrined for a while would have a status such as no bequest during his or her lifetime could obtain him. And any plebe would have a chance at the same.

For the museum it would be the ultimate collection, ultimate statement. While with such muniment, questions of light and dark would once again be minimal. Down those swarthy corridors our youth could once again walk through vistas of what the ages are, what death might be, and what reflection can be—for those who look ahead.

Yet that something new which all human endeavor yearns for will be added. The idea of a museum and the ideas of museums will be at last merged.

As for me—and I ask no other credit—I will have my mummies back.

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Art

"The Essential Cubism" in London

by Hilton Kramer

"It is a curious fact," writes Alan Bowness, "that there has never before been a major Cubist exhibition in London." Mr. Bowness, the director of the Tate Gallery, has lately set out to rectify this astonishing situation by inviting Douglas Cooper and Gary Tinterow to mount a major exhibition. The result is "The Essential Cubism: Braque, Picasso and Their Friends, 1907-1920."[1] This is in many ways a splendid exhibition and in some ways a peculiar one, but nothing in or about it is quite as peculiar as the "curious fact"—what an understatement!—that it has been so long in coming. Before turning to this interesting, if belated, exhibition, it might therefore be useful to place it in some historical perspective—though this is, admittedly, a little like attempting to trace the history of a void.

It is worth recalling in this connection that Alfred H. Barr, Jr., organized an exhibition of "Cubism and Abstract Art" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as long ago as 1936—roughly a quarter of a century after Alfred Stieglitz first introduced the work of Picasso and Braque to the American avant-garde at the 291 gallery and the Armory Show brought Cubism and other modernist styles to the attention of the public at large. These exhibitions exerted an immense influence on American art and on American taste, prompting not only artists but dealers, collectors, and critics to take a serious interest in the new European art. This in turn led to the formation of modernist collections that in many cases account for our remarkable museum holdings in this field today. These, in turn, have played a decisive role in shaping the course of American art over the last four or five decades. A similarly prompt response, especially to Cubism, can be traced among artists, collectors, and dealers in Germany and Russia—and the artistic results of this response proved to be of even greater consequence in the latter countries than in the United States.

The situation in England was very different, particularly where Cubism was concerned. The only events in English art history that form an approximate parallel to the Stieglitz exhibitions or the Armory Show are the two Post-Impressionism exhibitions that Roger Fry organized in London in 1910 and 1912. The first of these included but a single Cubist painting—Picasso's 1909 portrait of Clovis Sagot, now in the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle. In the second Post-Impressionism exhibition there were fifteen Picassos—but it was Matisse whose work dominated the exhibition with more than double this number, and the derision that Picasso's work met with on that occasion was never really

1 "The Essential Cubism: Braque, Picasso and Their Friends, 1907-1920," organized by Douglas Cooper and Gary Tinterow, opened at the Tate Gallery, London, on April 27 and remains on view through July 10. It will not be shown elsewhere.

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engaged even by the sponsors of the show. (Frances Spalding tells the whole story in her recent biography of Fry.) One has the impression that Fry never cared much for Cubism even though by 1914 he had acquired two Cubist collages—a Picasso and a Juan Gris—for his own collection. He certainly never became a critical champion of the movement, and no one else in Britain did, either. The dealers shunned it, the collectors ignored it, and what passed for an avant-garde in England satisfied itself with a second-rate substitute called Vorticism.

Oddly enough, Fry's enthusiasm, shared by many of his Bloomsbury friends, was largely reserved for the more decorative aspects of Cubism. These he eagerly adopted as design elements in the furniture and textiles produced by the Omega Workshops he organized in 1913. Yet far from advancing any real understanding of the Cubist aesthetic, this cozy, decorative use of its more superficial devices only served to blur its artistic importance. The Omega style—so typically Bloomsbury in the way it diluted and distorted modernism in the interests of aesthetic sociability—made Cubism look homey and insipid, while Vorticism made it look like little more than literary bluster. Together they effectively buried Cubism before it had a chance to win any vital following in England.

The consequences for modernist art in Britain were immense and almost wholly negative. It condemned painting to an insularity that punished originality and warped judgment—and, by no means incidentally, deprived England of a great many works of art that its own artists needed for their creative growth. (This is something to remember the next time you hear the whole world of adventurous dealers, collectors, museum curators, and critics ridiculed as nothing but a commercial racket.) In the Twenties, as Mr. Cooper points out in one of his essays for the catalogue of this exhibition, "Augustus John was still more highly valued than Matisse and Picasso," and this tradition, though nowadays somewhat chastened and certainly no longer as virulent or as smug as it once was, has not exactly run its course even today—as we can see in the preposterous overrating of a talent like David Hockney's, for example. But that, of course, is not solely an English problem.

Still, the situation in Britain is not what it was. In 1959 a gifted art historian and painter, John Golding, produced the first solid study of Cubist painting in *Cubism: A History and an Analysis 1907-1914,* and a whole generation of scholars and writers has rallied to provide an intelligent and well-informed literature on the European modernism that England largely missed out on during the course of its development. Mr. Bowness belongs to this generation, and under his direction the Tate Gallery is hastening at last to fulfill its obligation to serve as a genuine museum of modern art. For this purpose no exhibition was more important for the Tate to undertake than a major Cubism exhibition, for it is only in relation to Cubism that much else in the history of modernist art can be understood. Cubism was the great watershed in the art of the modern era—so much so that even those styles that have sought to reject it or somehow circumvent its influence have tended to define themselves in relation to it. Without a comprehensive knowledge of its history and its achievements, we are simply adrift, without compass or moorings, in the art of the century in which we live. This, more or less, has been the condition in which the British art public has often found itself.

It was a brilliant stroke, moreover—though also something of a gamble—for Mr. Bowness to invite Douglas Cooper to organize this exhibition. Mr. Cooper, I think it is fair to say, is not one of those figures who is universally beloved in the British art world. Wealthy, erudite, independent, outspoken, and more than a little cantankerous, he has never attempted to disguise his contempt for the critical opinions of his compatriots or for the provinciality (as he saw it) of their taste. Over a long career as a collector, writer, connoisseur, and organizer of exhibitions—he is now in his seventies—he has managed to leave a

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great many important people feeling somewhat bruised and ill-treated. Yet on certain subjects—and Cubism is one of them—he speaks with an unquestioned authority. Fifty years ago he set out to form his own collection in this field, and he had the money, the eye, and the sensibility and determination to make a resounding success of this endeavor. In the course of his activities, he got to know the major surviving artists—particularly Braque, Picasso, and Léger—and he produced a series of important scholarly works on their achievements, among them *Fernand Léger et le nouvel espace* (1949), *Letters of Juan Gris* (1956), *Picasso Theatre* (1968), and *Juan Gris, Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint* (1977). No doubt a younger generation of scholars will find much to add to these works—this is inevitable in any field of art-historical research—but Mr. Cooper will always have to be regarded as one of the pioneer scholars of Cubism. And by inviting Gary Tinterow to collaborate on this exhibition—Mr. Tinterow, an American art historian many years his junior, published an impressive catalogue of *Master Drawings by Picasso* for the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard in 1981—Mr. Cooper could be assured that his own catalogue for "The Essential Cubism" would avail itself of the most up-to-date research.[2]

As its title suggests, "The Essential Cubism" is an exhibition with a mission to fulfill. It seeks to concentrate upon and isolate the original impulses governing the creation of Cubism, and to separate the results from the many imitations and offshoots that almost immediately followed in the wake of its initial realization. This is not the simple task it may seem, for Cubism was one of those styles that had a lightning effect on virtually everything that surrounded it. It proved to be perilously easy to mimic—and to misunderstand—and it wasn't only in artistic backwaters like London that its essential quality was misperceived. At the same time, its influence was sometimes so hermetic that even now it goes largely undetected, or at least undiscussed. (Certain paintings that Matisse produced in the years immediately before the First World War, for example, would have been inconceivable without the prior development of Cubism, yet Matisse is rarely discussed in this connection.) Even where the influence of Cubism is obvious and unquestioned, there is the problem of distinguishing artistically significant consequences from abject dependency and superficial mimicry. Léger, for instance, made his entry into Cubism as something of an imitator, yet who would deny that he quickly made something authentic and original on his own? But where is one to draw the line on this authenticity—at Gleizes or Herbin or Klee or Feininger?—before the subject becomes unwieldy and meaningless? Then there is the knotty problem of so-called "late" Cubism, which for some writers has at one time or another been thought to include just about everything that modernist artists have produced in the last sixty years or so.

Twelve years ago Mr. Cooper undertook to explore this matter in an exhibition which he organized for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was called "The Cubist Epoch," and it was not a success. His primary sympathies were clearly reserved for what he called "true Cubism"—the subject he has returned to in "The Essential Cubism"—and he proved to be an uncertain and sometimes confused guide wherever he was called upon to make judgments beyond the boundaries of the materials he knew best. It was absurd, for example, to have excluded Julio González from the section devoted to Cubist sculpture while at the same time including the work of a minor figure like Otto

2 *The Essential Cubism: Braque, Picasso and Their Friends, 1907-1920* by Douglas Cooper and Gary Tinterow. The Tate Gallery, 448 pages. Every work in the exhibition is illustrated and given a detailed provenance. Mr. Cooper's essay on "Early Purchasers of True Cubist Art" traces the history of the dealers and collectors who took an interest in Cubist painting during the first two decades of its existence.

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Gutfreund. And in the whole uncharted realm of "late" Cubism, more often than not Mr. Cooper succumbed to the usual temptation—which is to admit the artists one knows and prefers while consigning all others to oblivion. For these and other reasons, "The Cubist Epoch" was rather a mess—a model of how *not* to organize a major historical exhibition.

Some of the problems that afflicted "The Cubist Epoch" are not entirely absent from "The Essential Cubism," as we shall see, but the bulk of the exhibition avoids them by concentrating on Braque, Picasso, Gris, and Léger, and giving us an almost step-by-step, picture-by-picture account of Cubist painting from its inception in 1907-1908 in the work of Braque and Picasso through the ensuing stages of its evolution, refinement, and elaboration in the pictures of all four masters and in the early sculptures of Picasso, Laurens, and Lipchitz. Not every key work in the history that is traced here is included, alas. Picasso's *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (1906-1907) from the Museum of Modern Art is the most conspicuous omission, and there are no loans from the great Russian collections. But the selection, numbering in all some two hundred thirty-three items, is remarkably comprehensive, all the same, and certainly adequate to the task of providing us with a profound experience of what it was that these artists achieved.

The very heart of this experience lies in the work of Braque and Picasso, of course, and not only in the earliest years of the Cubist initiative but right through to the eve of the First World War, and it is their art that is properly given priority in this exhibition. Messrs. Cooper and Tinterow are surely correct in insisting that "The central episode in the evolutionary history of Cubism is entirely dominated by Braque and Picasso, who together progressively perfected and consolidated their new manner of pictorial representation, and eventually (1911) shifted from a perceptual to a conceptual approach to reality." It is worth pausing over and emphasizing this reference to "pictorial *representation,*" I think, for it is now so easy to overlook its significance. Nearly three-quarters of a century of abstraction—the kind of abstraction, moreover, that owes its origins quite specifically to the conceptual aspects of Cubism—have tended to blur our understanding of the degree to which Cubism was indeed a radical mode of representation from its very inception, and also the degree to which it remained a mode of representation for its original creators right to the end of their careers. Much of the high drama that we experience in following the creation of this style and its evolving vision from painting to painting derives from the tension and conflict that we see enacted in the struggle of these artists to retain some residual contact with the representational function of art while feeling more and more compelled to give a fuller and more intense expression to the more formal, abstracting elements of their own discoveries. To counterbalance the driving force of this abstracting impulse, they introduced ingenious tokens of "reality"—hence the invention of the *papier collé*—almost as if they were seeking to avoid some fateful precipice. None of this could have been anticipated or programmed in advance. There were no theories or manifestos, no politics or ideology, no scientific reasoning or philosophical doctrines. Cubism was all a matter of disinterested discovery and inspiration, and it is the particular virtue of this exhibition that it so vividly restores to us precisely this sense of the artistic and intellectual discoveries that guided its course.

This is what finally separates the "essential" Cubism from its many peripheral offshoots—this sense of discovery that we are made to feel in the work of the masters. It is there in abundance in the work of Gris (who is especially well represented in the exhibition) and in Léger (who is not), and it isn't there at all in the work of Gleizes, Metzinger, Marcoussis, or Villon, and we feel the difference keenly. The latter occupy only a peripheral role in this exhibition, but even so, they don't belong in an exhibition called "The Essential Cubism," and it is

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almost cruel to their work to include it—they are so obviously outclassed. Otherwise, Messrs. Cooper and Tinterow have given London an exhibition that fully lives up to its name. Now it will be interesting to see what London finally makes of this belated effort to apprise it of the the most important event in the art of the twentieth century.

Editors' note: Readers are reminded that *The New Criterion* does not publish during July or August. Our next issue will appear, as scheduled, in September.

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Music

Blitzstein's cradle

by Samuel Lipman

Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock,* a quintessential piece of 1930s Communist agitprop, was presented through May by John Houseman and The Acting Company at the American Place Theater in New York. It was neat and tightly paced, musically well performed, and clearly communicative. Despite its virtues, however, the event was an artistic failure, and even as an ideological enterprise it occasioned none of the political fervor Blitzstein must have hoped to inspire, only the smirks and snickers of an obviously knowing audience. The production's importance lay elsewhere—in the realm of cultural politics, where Blitzstein himself has won such a considerable reputation.

Something in the nature of a myth now attaches to Marc Blitzstein as both creator and man. An assiduous propagator of that myth has been Blitzstein's close friend and associate, Leonard Bernstein. A tribute from Bernstein is published in his new book, *Findings,* and is reprinted in the program for *The Cradle Will Rock*:

> I was amazed at the slightness of this man I had imagined, through his music, to be a giant . . . . we walked, all afternoon, by the Charles River. Now that image leaps up in my mind: Marc lying on the banks of the Charles, talking, bequeathing to me his knowledge, insight, warmth—endlessly, with endless strength drawn, like that of Antaeus, from his contact with the earth. And gradually he became a giant again; and so he continued to be whenever he touched earth, sea, woods, snow. That was the secret of the giant who had written those notes which seduced my soul . . .

Blitzstein was born in 1905, the son of wealthy Philadelphia parents; he died in 1964 in a brawl (whether politically or socially caused remains unclear) with three sailors in a Martinique bar. He had proper musical training with pianist Alexander Siloti (Rachmaninoff's cousin) and then at the Curtis Institute in composition with Rosario Scalero. Like so many Americans in the 1920s, he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris; like very few, he also studied with Arnold Schoenberg in Berlin.

All this produced a modernist Blitzstein we know nothing of today. Our Blitzstein, if such he may be called, is rather the product of a timely marriage between the dramatic influence of Bertolt Brecht and the musical influence of Hanns Eisler and Kurt Weill. But to describe matters so clinically is to ignore the true formation of Blitzstein's artistic persona. Brecht and Eisler were Communists. Weill's work with Brecht in *Die Dreigroschenoper* (Berlin, 1928) had shown how a revolutionary social and political statement could be clothed in a music of power—and appeal.

For Blitzstein the result of these influences was the story and music of *The Cradle Will Rock,* written in 1937 under the auspices of the Federal Theatre Project (an arm of the WPA). The *Cradle* is set in "Steeltown,

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USA, on the night of a union drive." The characters are pasteboard figures of a Marxist morality play: a capitalist and his worthless family, supported by a cast of lackeys willing not only to be bought but also to sell out their loved ones. Policemen, a minister, an editor, a musician, a painter, a doctor, a druggist, a college president and his hired professors—these sinister characters are balanced by a soulful prostitute, a touching young Polish couple marked for a violent death (which is to be blamed on the union organizers), the druggist's dutiful young son, who is killed in an attempt to save the Poles, a woman (representing true proletarian family feeling) who demands justice for her union-supporter brother, and the steelworker head of the union drive, the true hero of the piece, who exudes simultaneously the toughness needed for struggle with the class enemy and the gentleness born of hope for a better world.

Just how far Blitzstein intended to render these characters as political symbols is eloquently conveyed by their names. The capitalist is dubbed Mr. Mister, his wife Mrs. Mister; his two children are Junior Mister and Sister Mister. The prostitute's name is Moll, and her john is called Gent. The policemen are Dick and Cop, the minister is Reverend Salvation. The editor is named Daily, the violinist Yasha, the painter Dauber, the college president President Prexy. The touching Poles are Gus and Sadie Polock, and the hero of labor is Larry Foreman.

This "labor opera," written with Brecht's encouragement, is in ten scenes (divided into two acts) variously located around Steeltown. The work opens with the prostitute, who is having trouble getting a living wage from her customer because of the Depression; when they argue, a detective demands a bribe from the man in order to let him go, and then himself makes a pass at the girl. Now the real business of Blitzstein's evening begins: in a grotesque but fitting misunderstanding, the police, acting on Mr. Mister's orders to arrest anyone showing up to hear union speakers, bring in the entire Liberty Committee, an organization of town worthies all under the capitalist thumb.

In Night Court, the tables are turned. As envisioned in the Communist Manifesto, the expropriators are expropriated; the bourgeoisie itself is on trial. The minister, in a series of flashbacks, is shown supporting World War I (and Mr. Mister's armaments profits) in return for Mrs. Mister's daintily dangled checks. The Mister children are shown frolicking in a depressed way on their father's lawns. The druggist is shown willing to send the Polish couple to their doom in order to save his store and seeing his son killed as a result. The artist and the musician are shown squabbling for Mrs. Mister's favors. After Mr. Mister (delayed by the union organizing drive) finally turns up to get his Liberty Committee stooges released, we see him first select a professor (named Scoot) to deliver a pep talk to students on the subject of military preparedness (read anti-union repression) and then behave like a coward as he undergoes a physical examination from Dr. Specialist. It all ends happily when, back in Night Court, Larry Foreman refuses Mr. Mister's bribe and vows to continue the fight for unions and solidarity. The final chorus consists of the menacing slogan "The Cradle Will Rock!" The audience is left with no doubt that this cradle is the social structure that upholds a moribund yet vicious bourgeoisie.

It is hardly surprising, given the political nature of its characters and action, that nothing about *The Cradle Will Rock* has caused more notoriety than the circumstances of its entry into the world of show business. Indeed, before the audience is vouchsafed one word or note of Blitzstein's in the current production, it is presented with a ten-minute speech read by John Houseman detailing the attempts to block the first performance. Not only did the Federal Theatre Project and WPA administrators try to block it, but the unions representing the actors and the musicians cooperated in the embargo by demanding full wages for their work. The irony of prefacing Blitzstein's union exhortation with the implied

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claim that the unions' demanding scale was somehow unprogressive appeared lost both on Mr. Houseman and on the audience. Saying that he and Orson Welles (who collaborated with him on the original *Cradle*) were not terribly political, Mr. Houseman went on to describe the search for a theater to replace the one closed to them by the government, and the frenzied preparations to do the show without orchestra and without onstage actors. In the end, of course, Blitzstein himself played all the music on an old upright piano, and the actors performed from the audience. Everything ended happily: the audience was large and enthusiastic, the press copious and ecstatic. The show ran in various theaters for more than a hundred performances.

The current production re-creates certain aspects of the premiere. The music is provided by a pianist seated at an upright, his back to the audience[1]; the first song, that of the prostitute, comes from the audience. Almost all the action thereafter takes place on the nearly empty stage. The cast delivered the lines forcefully and with conviction. The dance sequences involving the Mister children were properly frenetic, and even funny. The actors seemed well prepared to exploit the stereotypical possibilities inherent in the characters they were playing. Mr. Mister was fat and bullying; Mrs. Mister was a nice combination of Joan Mondale as arts advocate and Hermione Gingold as la-de-da opportunist; Reverend Salvation was appropriately unctuous and creepy; Gus and Sadie Polock were almost unbearably clean-cut, vulnerable, and loving; Patti LuPone, playing the two opposing roles of Moll and Sister Mister, managed to be fully authentic in both. And Larry Foreman, acted by Randle Mell, was the very model of the craggy and handsome worker-hero, not quite clean-shaven and possessing a voice per-

1 The pianist in this production, Michael Barrett, also serves as musical director. He plays the piano marvelously, with accuracy, brilliance, and rhythmic verve. One must assume that he shares some responsibility for the excellent singing of the cast.

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fectly suited to putting all the girls to bed.

But it didn't work. *The Cradle Will Rock* is not a moving moment in the theater. Part of the problem undoubtedly lies with the music. So much attention has been focused on Blitzstein's sociodramatic debt to Brecht that one might overlook Blitzstein's abject musical robbery from the less political Weill. The score of the *Cradle* is inconceivable without the prior existence of the *Dreigroschenoper*. The sound of Macheath and Brown's *Kanonen-Song* is all over the *Cradle*; Peachum's *Morgenchoral* is all too clearly the model for Reverend Salvation's pious crooning of the virtues of peace. Blitzstein's score, however, is Weill's *Dreigroschenoper* without the music. Limited as Weill was as a composer, he did manage on this occasion a tuneful, jazzy, and altogether memorable piece; Blitzstein's *Cradle* score, by comparison, passes by the ears hardly noticed.

Much of the problem of the *Cradle* lies with Blitzstein's conscious decision to replace the individuality of his characters with their class identification and function. The idea of calling the capitalist owner Mr. Mister is witty, but it is also brittle; when applied to a whole world of people, and when made the ruling gimmick of an entire dramatic work, the conclusion cannot be avoided that "man" has replaced men, and that politics has replaced life. Blitzstein, in company with a whole line of Stalinist writers ranging from Brecht to the Soviets themselves, must have been aware that in so doing he was depriving his work of what remains most moving on the stage: the lonely encounter of a distinct individual with the world. To make up for this curious self-denial, Communist art must wallow in bathos and sentimentality. Blitzstein's *Cradle* is full of just such false sentiment, of stock emotions being summoned up to animate stock ideas. The result is soap-opera feeling at Broadway prices.

What is really interesting about *The Cradle Will Rock* is thus hardly its achievement as art, or even its present influence on our culture. The biggest prizes of the Great White Way, after all, went to Rodgers and Hammerstein, Frank Loesser, Lerner and Loewe, and not Eisler and Brecht, or even Weill. And as for its politics, that too seems hardly in the forefront now. *The New York Times* quotes John Houseman saying:

> The only aspect of the work that's dated is Marc's excessive love of unions . . . . There are other themes—the fact that artists sometimes sponge off the rich and that doctors and newspaper editors don't always have the most impeccable morals—which still makes sense to us today. Actually, the play's only message is that a town run by a boss is not a good town. It's really that simple.

Unfortunately, it is really *not* that simple. Heinrich Heine, no mean observer of human affairs, once wrote about the recurrent vagaries of love:

Es ist eine alte Geschichte,
Doch bleibt sie immer neu;
Und wem sie just passieret,
Dem bricht das Herz entzwei.

(It's an old story,
and yet it's always new;
he to whom it happens,
his heart breaks in two.)

For aesthetic devotees of Stalinism like Blitzstein, the problem is not the heart, but the art. The wages of the Party line are not just heartbreak, but creative bankruptcy. A decade of artistic disappointment after the Bolshevik revolution, followed by more than a half century of the Soviet intellectual desert, might have been thought enough to get the lesson across. But political education, after all, is continuing education, which is one reason why *The Cradle Will Rock* once again requires to be considered.

The real significance of *The Cradle Will Rock* lies in its appeal to that intellectual stratum that sees itself as peculiarly qualified to package the truth for a mass public. This stratum does not attend the theater for an

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aesthetic experience. Thus, the audience for the *Cradle* the night I attended seemed largely drawn, not from the public at large, but from the world of the theater, and from allied activities. Its response was not that of feeling, but rather of *knowing*. It knew, in other words, just which buttons were being pushed, and it showed its admiration for the techniques displayed by what can only be described as a kind of politically smutty laughter.

Here, indeed, is a Stalinism, not of politics, but of culture. Writers, Stalin is credited with having said, are the engineers of human souls. His literary category is certainly flexible enough to include actors and musicians as well. Too many of these people, by virtue of their supposed facility in the manipulation of symbols, go through life conscious on the one hand of their desire to influence the masses and acutely aware on the other of just how unemployed those powers are in capitalist-bourgeois society. Indeed, it is the evil genius of Communism to hold before these intellectuals the prospect of a work they dearly love.

Marc Blitzstein and *The Cradle Will Rock,* by plugging into this vicious seduction, are ensured a revival any time intellectuals are conscious of being out of their true work. Surely there must be a better way of finding a job.

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The Apocalyptic Vision: Four New Imagists

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Exhibition June 2 through July 15, 1983

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Letter from London

Politics on stage

by Herb Greer

The fires of early spring have awakened moral fervor in the cultural apparatchiks of the Greater London Council. Under the leadership of Trotskyist Ken Livingstone, this august British soviet issued a grim ukase in March: henceforth no circus using trained animal acts shall set foot, perform, or otherwise expose itself on GLC-owned land. The circus ban is part of the British Left's new and wild dedication to animal rights. This has inspired a fierce promise that Labor—if it wins the General Election—will prohibit the shooting of innocent pheasants, guinea fowl, quail, and pigeons, and eradicate the hunting of innocent foxes. Innocent fish, being a quarry of the proletariat, are not to be protected. Thus do comrades Foot, Benn, and Livingstone aspire with dumb animals to capture the voices of dumb voters.

The fact that politicians offer a much funnier show than anything to be found here upon a proper stage does say something about the quality of what most theatergoers are getting for their six to eight pounds. The *épatant* left-wing fashion of the Seventies, though it threw up (no pun intended) a lot of incredibly dreary theater, did at least make for some noisy and sometimes amusing argument in the foyers and the media. Most of this has long since bubbled away into the fringe groups that play during the lunch hour in pubs or tour the British hinterland, now and then storming into town to perform for London audiences. Those who fancy this sort of thing can trek down to the affluent frontier between Belgravia and Chelsea, where Sloane Square's Royal Court Theatre is presenting *Victory* by the radical-chic-cum-anarchist playwright Howard Barker. His characters, in this play and others, are notoriously prone to the syndrome of Gilles de la Tourette. This is a rare pathological condition of the lower brain that manifests itself in sudden outbursts of foul language. So in *Victory* we have King Charles II and Milton koprolalling on about the cares of life and politics after the late seventeenth-century restoration of the English monarchy. There is a strong suspicion here of nudge-wink parallels with the New Tory Age under Margaret Thatcher, but this has spattered no flecks of foam upon the lips of London critics.

Ideologically pumped indignation about some play or other is in short supply these days. One remembers wistfully the great argy-bargy over Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain,* which brought simulated (forcible) sodomy to the stage of the National Theatre. What really gave power and scope to the outrage over this was its metaphorical content: a specific suggestion that the British Army is—so to speak—buggering the poor innocent IRA in Ulster. This provocative sample of political comment ended up in court, and producers are more cautious now.

A recent eruption in the dull pages of

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The Times centered on a show that was staged not in London but up north in Manchester, at the Royal Exchange Theatre, by one of Britain's better provincial repertory companies. This was a production—I cannot call it a dramatization—of excerpts and scenes from Nadezhda Mandelstam's book about the persecution and death of her poet husband under Stalin. Like the first volume of the book, the show was called *Hope Against Hope*. *The Guardian*'s northern critic, a pleasant fellow called Robin Thornber, took against the show, calling it a propagandist sob story and putting down Osip Mandelstam (or his stage persona) as an "unstable nutter" and a snob. This was too much for *Times* columnist Bernard Levin; once a trenchant if rather lightweight commentator and critic, Levin is now a literary daw or fussbudget, tending on these occasions to pompous, comically warped hysteria:

> . . . to present the few men and women who dared to resist murder as insignificant riff-raff is to make good and evil change places, and if there are too many of Mr. Thornber's kind that change will be permanent . . . .
>
> Who will condemn [Mandelstam and his wife]? Why, Mr. Thornber will . . . . to write words like these about a man like that is to dirty and diminish mankind. The Mandelstams' goodness and heroism will live long after Mr. Thornber's ashes have been scattered on a dunghill . . . .

Mr. Thornber is also, it seems, "a leading contender in the competition for human baseness." My!

As it happens, I saw the show at the Royal Exchange. Very deliberately it sets out Mandelstam's story: the night visit by the secret policemen who arrest him; the consequent tangles with Soviet bureaucracy; the rallying of friends, who give money for the poet and his wife to take into exile; the train journey to Siberia; the fall into madness and the attempted suicide; the tooth-grinding attempt and failure to write a poem that would placate Stalin; the return to Moscow, the final arrest, and the separation of wife and husband—all ending with news of the poet's death in a labor camp.

It is an outline for a gripping play, almost Greek in the pitting of a hero against gods that destroy him in the end. But we do not live in classical times. Mandelstam was not destroyed by gods but by a government, and he was not in any case the Greek sort of hero. What he was is described at length in his wife's complex, sprawling, often ambiguous account of their suffering. During that hellish season when more people were slaughtered by their own leaders in the Soviet Union than in Europe by Hitler during the whole twelve years of his reign, Mandelstam remained a man who was fundamentally cheerful and who enjoyed life, writing very few sad poems. At the Royal Exchange one saw a glum, brooding fellow, actually rather dull, who (so the narration said) wrote fine poetry, was hounded into a nervous breakdown and then exiled, and who finally dies offstage. Very little of Mandelstam's verse was used in the show, and that was given in a translation which gave no sense of its effect either *in* Russian or—much more important—*on* Russians. From time to time the poet is seen agonizing over a page or two, but the act of poetizing is not very dramatic or exciting to watch; the audience had to take it on faith that he was a fine poet. This problem always exists with such characters, and it is summed up nicely in Mrs. Mandelstam's book, in a chapter which deals with her husband's hallucinations during his breakdown. He remembers his interrogators as voices in his head:

> "The voices," M. said to me once, "are like a composite quotation of everything I heard." ("Composite quotation" is an expression coined by Andrei Bely, who said that for him every writer was represented not by a series of separate, word-for-word quotations, but by a kind of "composite quotation" that summed up the essentials of his thoughts and words.)

The man who adapted *Hope Against Hope* (Caspar Wrede, a Finn who is a director of

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the Royal Exchange Company) does not give us a "composite quotation," either for Mandelstam or (as the play-of-the-book should) for his ordeal. Of course the book presents an awkward problem. What it describes is clearly not an epic of "resistance" in the melodramatic freedom-fighter sense suggested by the apoplectic Levin. It is the account of a literary coterie that did not "resist murder" because they could not. At best one or another of them might make a quixotic and personal literary gesture, like the exasperated little verse against Stalin that cost Osip Mandelstam his life. A writer might try to intercede with the bureaucracy and save a friend or colleague, as Pasternak, Akhmatova, and a few others did. But for the most part, the literati, when they did not actually support "murder," simply retreated into a kind of political dumb insolence, or tried to stay out from under and survive.

This show never posed or even touched upon the question of why a poet—and a somewhat rarefied poet at that—should be specially persecuted by a political leader. There was no suggestion of why that single caustic poem and the very unpolitical man who wrote it were so *important* to Stalin. A persecutor must have a reason for what he does, even if it exists only in his own mind; like the poet, he must have a "composite quotation," and it is the business of the dramatist to provide this. It might have helped if there had been some hint of that special public excitement which poetry can create in Russia—a phenomenon unmatched in the West. All we, the audience, were given was a poor mad wretch and his prolix, not very beautiful wife martyred by a remote offstage evil called Stalin, apparently out of petty spite over a single poem. This is possible, but it is not dramatic. Without some shadow of the peculiar force of poetry in Russia and the consequent importance of a literary élite (and therefore of Osip Mandelstam), this performance of *Hope Against Hope* made no dramatic sense except in terms of "what everyone knows," namely that Communist totalitarianism is awful and Stalin was a cruel and bloody tyrant. A banal display of "what everyone knows" is the primary fabric of propaganda.

Alas, the base and dreadful Thornber was right after all: not just the poor insane protagonist but his nemesis in this piece *were* riff-raff (albeit significant)—a species of excelsior-stuffed dummies normally favored by purveyors of agitprop. What could have been a harsh, gripping, and edifying piece of theater *was*—inadvertently, but no less so for that—a propaganda sob story. As such it traduced the real Osip Mandelstam, his wife, and the desperate hope expressed in the title of her book. Against the most abominable and absolute tyrant some sort of victory may be possible, even in death. But against the shallow sentimentality of bad theater even the great and the noble can do nothing.

Words-on-the-stage (as opposed to action) are also the core of *A Map of the World* by David Hare, playing at the National Theatre in London and, I am told, soon to be seen in New York. A reverent and slightly bemused review by Edward Behr in *Newsweek* called it "a new kind of theater—a theater of doubt, of ambiguity, of argument and counterargument." Obviously Mr. Behr has never seen or read another play in his life, since none of these things are new in the theater, and even the diffuse form of the play has precedents, which I will mention shortly.

A Map of the World is a series of David Hare's political essays, put into the setting of a UNESCO conference in a Bombay hotel and uttered by a number of characters, most of whom spend a great deal of time sitting down. There is an Indian novelist styled after V. S. Naipaul (in the play he is Victor Mehta), who mocks the radical chic view of the Third World and repeats some of the current arguments against aid to underdeveloped countries. His opponent is a young British left-wing journalist who tends to stand up when he is talking and gesture with his fists. He sticks up for the Third World and abuses the literary types who insist on telling the truth from the sidelines rather than getting involved and *doing* things.

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Around these two circulate, as in an aquarium, various minor characters: a sexy girl journalist, sundry diplomats, a film director, and a CBS reporter played with amazing power and humor—considering that there is almost nothing to the part—by a brilliant American actress, Sheila Scott-Wilkinson.

There is no plot to speak of, but there is a situation. The novelist has come by invitation to address the UNESCO conference on aid. But the acerbic views he expresses onstage are also printed in his novels; an African delegation is aware of this and very upset about it. If the novelist speaks, they intend to walk out, spoil the conference, and disrupt a program of aid for starving blacks. To avert this odd exercise of cutting off the nose to save face (psychology is not Mr. Hare's strong point), the young left-wing journalist proposes a compromise: he has composed a statement in which the novelist disavows the truth of what he has written. If he reads this before speaking, there will be no walkout, the conference will be saved, etc. Everyone pleads with the obdurate novelist: does it matter just this once? Fiction is, well, *fiction*; can't he just say so? Under pressure the novelist agrees to a private debate on the issue with the young Brit, with the CBS lady as judge. If the novelist loses, he has to read the statement, and the sexy girl journalist (who happens to be his *femme du moment*) will sleep with the young Englishman (who is very keen on her, although she does not really fancy him). Standing up, shaking his fists, and orating passionately, the young journalist wins the debate. He does this by avoiding argument altogether and sneering at the novelist for being a wordy type who does not "get involved" and *do* things. This dazzles the sexy girl, who is about to fall into those left-wing arms (if I may put it that way) when the young hero says no. He is abandoning all this arguing and writing and going out among the poor to *do* things. By an unhappy coincidence he is killed almost immediately in a train accident. The statement remains unread, and the novelist marries the sexy girl and finally writes a book about it all, which we are

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watching as it is filmed, in scenes which shift between the set and (maybe) reality.

Aside from the Pirandello-trimmings, the form of the play is old and familiar. It is like a seventeenth-century-style Dialogue on the Third World Systems, with the young leftist as Salviati, the CBS lady as Sagredo, and the novelist as—not exactly Simplicio, but something like the Pope, if Galileo had dared to put him in. I hasten to add that David Hare is no modern Galileo, though the issues he gnaws at in this play are serious enough. The problem is that his discussion of aid and its effects on the Third World is warmed-over stuff from other people's books, the newspapers, and television chat shows. The matter of tension between the man of action and the commentator is not really discussed at all, but dealt with in a series of cheap shots, which are also aimed at greedy, exploitative, cynical (etc.) characters in the developed world. Cheap shots can be very effective in the theater, and very flattering to those who happen to share such views, but they are not much help if, as Hare says, he wants to make people think. His way of refuting the novelist's opinions, for instance, is to have the young leftist curl his lip and repeat them in a contemptuous tone of voice. The impression created is not that of a thinker but of a question-begging idiot.

In the end there is no ambiguity or real argument about any of the issues that are raised in this play. Hare, who actually believes that some sort of "liberal experiment" is going on in the Third World, claims to be "hidden in the play behind so many characters." This is standard procedure for any dramatist of quality, but when Hare hides behind his novelist, he has a knife in his hand. A little epilogue to the main story tells us how to read the characters and the play. The novelist explains that distortions that may occur in the wording of the tale don't matter, so long as the rest of us have the *real* truth safely in our heads. The unmentioned question is, how does it get there? In this piece it is done by the manipulation of sympathy. Our hearts are tugged toward the person and views of the young leftist who, like the wounded Shane riding off into the sunset, leaves his lady to another man and goes off to do what a man has to *do*. It is not his fault if he bumps into a train along the way. The novelist, now, he may have a point or two, but he is a shit, and so never mind him or what he says. One's sympathies are thus strung into the propositions: a) we must pour aid into the Third World whether it is harmful or not, and whether or not the poor get it, and b) the irritating truth must *on principle* take second place to the need to get things *done*. All this has the unfortunate effect of putting Hare on the side of people he would probably not admire very much, like Hitler and Mussolini and some of those liberal experimenters in the Third World.

The word "playwright" connotes a craftsman rather than a writer-intellectual, though on the evidence of his own statements Hare aspires to the latter profession. This being the case, it is odd that he should understand its role so badly; he appears quite unaware that the man of action and the chattering, scribbling gadfly are not really opposing figures, but complementary. While the politician must, for reasons too obvious to labor here, sometimes and even often falsify and fiddle with the truth, the writer can perform the vital function of keeping truth alive, so that despite the exigencies of action it is not lost or out of sight for very long. Without this annoying fellow, we would probably all still be living in caves or huts, and dying in large numbers from disease and necessary lies.

Ironically, this play came about because there are people in the Third World who are dying just like that. Some time ago Hare flew into Bombay and saw some of them, and the "atmosphere" inspired him to write *A Map of the World*. His compassion also dragged him into the supposition that oppression and suffering and poverty confer a singular nobility on their victims, with a kind of ethical halo that must awe those of us who are comfortable and well-fed. Seen in less plushy circumstances than a jetliner

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excursion to India—say from the midst of a genuine revolution—refugees, victims, and other objects of chic compassion do not look quite the same as they do to Mr. Hare. Lies, starvation, disease, poverty, and oppression do not confer an ethical and moral glow. The sufferers become mean, envious, bitter, desperate, merciless, and utterly inimical, above all to the fat cats who are sending them "aid" that is creamed off by military forces or corrupt distributors or crooked politicians who do not give a damn about their own poor. By sneering such facts out of court, writers can cheat, just like politicians do. Mr. Hare wants to watch out for that.

A few years ago the director Vivian Matalon told me an amusing anecdote about David Hare. During rehearsals of one of his early plays, the playwright was discovered in the back row, cowering down and trying to cover his head with his hands and arms. The concerned Matalon asked what was the matter, and Hare replied: "I can't stand what I'm doing to those actors." His anxiety was misplaced. Actors love performing his work, as several of them have told me. And some National Theatre audiences did respond warmly to *A Map of the World.* For all the silliness, for all the bad psychology, half-cocked argumentation, and emotional cheating, Hare clearly does give something to these people that they enjoy. I suspect that with this production both actors and spectators have the feeling that they are dealing with important people who are in turn dealing with important ideas. This is naturally an illusion, but the business of the theater *is* illusion, and Hare (who directed the play) has to be given credit for his success in creating it. This suggests that he may, despite the flaws—and these are formidable—have something genuine, valuable, and interesting to offer. It may not be up to the political ironies and farce in the real world, but on the evidence of others I am willing to believe it can be entertaining. And Hare is fashionable and very solvent, which does give him time to catch up with the politicians. I wish him luck with that.

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Books

New British poets

by Donald Hall

Twenty-six years ago, three American poets —I was one of them—put together *The New Poets of England and America.* We paired poets of the two countries in one alphabetical order, as if "England and America" shared a common enterprise. No longer would anthologists suggest such a thing. Of the twenty poets in this new Penguin *Contemporary British Poetry*[1]—aged thirty-two to fifty—only Seamus Heaney is known in the United States.

In the late Fifties, it was common for English critics to lament that poetic vitality had departed imperial shores and emigrated to this half-savage country. Americans tended to accept this view, largely flattering although spiced with condescension. But by 1983, few Britons care for contemporary American poetry; the excellent English magazine *PN Review* mentions the American scene mostly to abuse it. Americans, on the other hand, dismiss British poetry without abuse—which is worse, because we do not read it at all. Few Americans are acquainted even with Geoffrey Hill, who has written the best poems of our time.[2] Doubtless the old notion of a common enterprise was an illusion—the literatures are separate enough—but bilateral provinciality does no one any good.

Editing this new Penguin, Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion are conscious of an historical role; it is their business to supplant *The New Poetry,* A. Alvarez's anthology of twenty years back, with its exaltation of madness and suicide. I think that they claim too much for their moment—and I think that they are right to make such claims. There is no reason to select the contemporary unless we intend advocacy. No one should go to the trouble of making an anthology without the passion and bias that necessitate errors of taste.

Of the twenty poets here, only five are women, and none of the women is among the best. I do not accuse the editors of chauvinism; I point to an odd national difference. Surely the best women poets of the language are American: Emily Dickinson, H. D., Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop. Would you add Christina Rossetti? Edith Sitwell? Possibly—but the point remains. And if we look at the contemporary scene in the two countries, the contrast becomes stronger; the best *younger* American poets are women. If we cross westward to Ireland—which is the country of poets—this oddity becomes odder: the gender of "poet" is male. In two large, recent anthologies of Irish poetry—one from the centuries, the other contemporary—I discover only two women among hundreds of years and poets.

The poet who concludes this anthology is

1 *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry,* edited by Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion. Penguin (London), 208 pages, £1.95

2 See Mr. Hall's essay, "Geoffrey Hill," in *The Weather for Poetry,* published recently by the University of Michigan Press.—Ed.

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one of the two. Medbh (pronounced Maeve) McGuckian was born in 1950 in Belfast. If the rarity of Irish women poets is extraordinary, so is the preponderance of Northern Irish poets on the contemporary British scene. For in this Penguin alone we read six poets from Northern Ireland. Derek Mahon was born in 1941 in Belfast, Michael Longley in 1939 in Belfast, and Seamus Heaney, also born in 1939, down the road in Co. Derry. Paul Muldoon (b. 1951) comes from Co. Armagh. Tom Paulin was born in Leeds, but he is Irish and grew up in Belfast. According to these editors, six out of twenty "contemporary British poets" derive from embattled Northern Ireland. They could have chosen more. Only a little older are John Montague and Thomas Kinsella, but they are from Eire. Within the bounds of this anthology, we might have found James Simmons, Seamus Deane, and Cioran Carson. Doubtless there are good people I do not know of; it is not easy to keep up with Ireland from New Hampshire's Co. Merrimack.

But is Ireland "Britain"? I do not propose to resolve a question over which blood has flowed for centuries. Although "British" is as ill-favored a term as "senior citizen," it is useful for acknowledging that Scots and Welsh are often un-English. But poets from Ulster, Catholic and Protestant both, share more with poets of Eire than they do with poets of Wales, Scotland, and England. This "British" anthology sets six Irishmen against fourteen Britons; and the exclusion of poets from Eire is as arbitrary as the inclusion of poets from Ulster. Irish poets are no more British than Americans are. But let that be.

Many of these Irish poets worked together when they were young. Some studied with the Englishman Philip Hobsbaum when he taught at Belfast in the 1960s. Later, Paul Muldoon was Seamus Heaney's student. Not all have stayed put in Ulster. Derek Mahon lives in London. Heaney moved south to Eire, whence he now flies to the United States to teach a term a year at Harvard. Tom Paulin will soon move to the United States. Most have at least traveled on our side of the waters—Muldoon has a long funny poem recounting the Irish bard's America—but I could wish we read them more. We are helped by the Wake Forest University Press, which publishes a good many books of these poets, including Derek Mahon's new, beautiful *The Hunt by Night*.

The rest continue to live in the violent North. One is tempted to quote Harry Lime on cuckoo clocks, but one only speculates: does the madness beget the poetry? For certain, song rises from bitter Belfast, be it from the throat of Seamus Heaney (an octave from "Glanmore Sonnets")

> I dreamt we slept in a moss in Donegal
> On turf banks under blankets, with our faces
> Exposed all night in a wetting drizzle,
> Pallid as the dripping sapling birches.
> Lorenzo and Jessica in a cold climate.
> Diarmuid and Grainne waiting to be found.
> Darkly asperged and censed, we were laid out
> Like breathing effigies on a raised ground.

or Michael Longley ("Swans Mating")

> Even now I wish that you had been there
> Sitting beside me on the riverbank:
> The cob and his pen sailing in rhythm
> Until their small heads met and the final
> Heraldic moment dissolved in ripples.
>
> This was a marriage and a baptism,
> A holding of breath, nearly a drowning,
> Wings spread wide for balance where he trod,
> Her feathers full of water and her neck
> Under the water like a bar of light.

or Derek Mahon ("Leaves")

> The prisoners of infinite choice
> Have built their house
> In a field below the woods
> And are at peace.
>
> It is autumn, and dead leaves
> On their way to the river
> Scratch like birds at the windows
> Or tick on the road.

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Somewhere there is an afterlife
Of dead leaves,
A stadium filled with an infinite
Rustling and sighing.

Somewhere in the heaven
Of lost futures
The lives we might have led
Have found their own fulfilment.

Sometimes these poets write of politics—Tom Paulin is the most political—or of ordinary life distorted by the extremes prevailing in Ulster. But it is not subject matter that they have in common; they have in common a sensuous singing line: the real thing.

In this Penguin, the choice of the fourteen non-Irish poets seems middle-of-the-road, neither left nor right—nor inevitable. I miss a few young Englishmen who belong to a conservative movement influenced by the poet and critic Yvor Winters, a name to reckon with in contemporary England: Robert Wells, Dick Davis, Jeremy Hooker, Paul Mills. But I also miss the innovative sorts influenced by American poetry, like Tom Pickard.

The editors of this anthology make much of "the Martian Poets," a school whose name derives from Craig Raine's second book, *A Martian Writes a Postcard Home.* I find myself skeptical. The conceit is antique: one will write of something familiar as if seeing it for the first time, or, as the editors put it, "viewing the commonplace with wonder and innocence."

The results sound like American poems of the Thirties or Forties—Karl Shapiro writing "Buick," John Frederick Nims doing "Dollar Bill." On the whole, the American Martians of forty years ago did it better than Craig Raine, who here describes a household object:

In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,
that snores when you pick it up.

If the ghost cries, they carry it
to their lips and soothe it to sleep
with sounds. And yet, they wake it up
deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

Because you are required to guess what the object is—"A telephone?" "Right! Give this gentleman the Amana Radar Range!"—this writing resembles ancient riddles. It is not a new imagination; it is an old fancy. At its best it is ingenious, and it is not always at its best. When I hear of the light bulb—"Light ripens / the electric pear"—I remember a page from the *Reader's Digest* in the dentist's waiting room, a running feature called "Picturesque Speech and Patter," which memorialized phrases like "popcorn clouds."

But the world of *Contemporary British Poetry* does not range only from Belfast to the *Reader's Digest.* Some English poets here are ambitious and strong. I especially like Jeffrey Wainwright and Tony Harrison. Wainwright has done his apprenticeship to Geoffrey Hill, but he is not an imitator. If influence remains in these poems, it resides mainly in organizational strategies and titles. This poet is stately and unforgiving; closed-in; contained and powerful with the pressure of containment. He undertakes ambitious sequences of poems like "Thomas Munzer" and "1815," from which I take this example:

IV. Death of the Mill-Owner

Shaking the black earth
From a root of potatoes,
The gardener walks
To the kitchen door.

The trees rattle
Their empty branches together.

Upstairs the old man
Is surprised.
His fat body clenches—
Mortified
At what is happening.

Tony Harrison is a translator for the National Theatre and New York's Metropolitan Opera. As a poet he spreads himself wide

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and leaves himself vulnerable. Harrison specializes in anger. (Always fussed about class, the British are better at anger and irony than we are.) He writes slangy, working-class, enraged, sentimental sonnets, in which every nameable attribute of emotion, form, diction, and intent is at the throat of every other attribute. The result is sloppy, tense, incomplete, conflicted, painful, and vigorous. Look at "Self-Justification":

> Me a poet! My daughter with maimed limb
> became a more than tolerable sprinter.
> And Uncle Joe. Impediment spurred him,
> the worst stammerer I've known, to be a
> printer.
>
> He handset type much faster than he spoke.
> Those cruel consonants, *m*s, *p*s, and *b*s
> on which his jaws and spirit almost broke
> flicked into order with sadistic ease.
>
> It seems right that Uncle Joe, 'b-buckshee
> from the works', supplied those scribble pads
> on which I stammered my first poetry
> that made me seem a sissy to the lads.
>
> Their aggro towards me, my need of them 's
> what keeps my would-be mobile tongue still
> tied—
> aggression, struggle, loss, blank printer's ems
> by which all eloquence gets justified.

It is hard for Americans to read. Indeed, the only way for Americans to read British poetry now—and the British to read American—is to admit that we are sight-reading a foreign language.

In this book other poets well worth reading include Andrew Motion, Douglas Dunn, Peter Scupham, James Fenton, and Tom Paulin. When we read with the respect we reserve for an alien culture, we can learn from our brothers (and a few sisters), who are also our opposites.

Hope against hope

Czeslaw Milosz The Witness of Poetry. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1981-1982. Harvard University Press, 121 pages, $8.95

reviewed by Stanislaw Barańczak

"All right, but doesn't it all boil down to his conviction that literature should be an *uplifting* business?" I was asked this question by an American friend of mine when we exchanged opinions on the first of Czeslaw Milosz's six Norton Lectures at Harvard. His skepticism struck me as being out of accord with the usual appraisal of Milosz's work. After all, Milosz's name has always been associated by Polish critics with the dark mood of the 1930s—with the "catastrophist" school in prewar poetry. And his more recent poetry and prose hardly show him to be an easygoing optimist. Ironically, Milosz's lectures coincided with the imposition of martial law in Poland—in other words, with yet another attempt to bury Polish hopes.

And yet the underlying theme of Milosz's six lectures is nothing less than hope, and poetry as a possible source of hope. Hope against hope, to be sure, since the author himself realizes that almost nothing in either contemporary poetry or the recent history of our civilization seems to justify such expectations. At least in Western societies, the reading public as well as poets themselves have long been reconciled with a poetry reduced to confessing its own helplessness. Milosz begins by looking at the problem from a different perspective. His poetic credo has been shaped, after all, by his experience as an East European poet living in exile in the West. Accordingly, his introductory lecture, "Starting from my Europe" (which condenses the broad range of problems treated in his earlier essays), presents the cultural experience of his youth. The remote Polish-Lithuanian corner of Europe where he lived was strangely situated: geographically between East and West,

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culturally between Rome and Byzantium, historically between past and future. Here, people developed a keen sense of historical relativity. None of the disasters that swept over these crossroads of civilizations could seem final and irreversible; every vision of the future had to allow for some eschatology. In that country of historical cataclysms poetry became "a home for incorrigible hope."

For Milosz, "the witness of poetry" means much more than "poetry as a testimony." A testimony can be wrung out of someone; a witness is born voluntarily, by someone who wants to help justice. If poetry is supposed to bear witness, that means it is considered a form of active participation in man's affairs. In a poem written just after World War II, Milosz stated his position this way:

> What is poetry which does not save
> Nations or people?
> A connivance with official lies,
> A song of drunkards whose throats will be cut
> in a moment,
> Readings for sophomore girls.

The very fact of presenting the problem in such extreme terms was an act of defiance. It defied Auden and so many others, and it stood against Milosz's own doubts. At least in this poem, Milosz was sure that poetry can "make something happen." But can it really? If we leave Eastern Europe for a moment and consider poetry the world over, we will see that, instead of bearing witness, twentieth-century poetry "testifies to serious disturbances in our perception of the world." The second, third, and fourth of Milosz's lectures analyze three specific forms of such disturbances. The first of them is sociological. The birth of artistic bohemians in the middle of the nineteenth century resulted from the poet's gradual alienation from "the great human family." Since that moment, a schism between the poet and the rest of society has become accepted fact. Culture has been divided into pure art for the chosen few and entertainment or didactic instruction for the despised philistines. The poet has deliberately chosen to become an outcast, and his work has turned from the pursuit of reality to various attempts to cultivate art for art's sake. But, as Milosz tries to show, the dichotomy of "reality" and "pure art" was, in fact, false. It is possible to conceive of a poetry that is at the same time mystical and yet immersed in history, artistically minded and yet responsive to social reality, individualist and yet not isolated from "the human family."

Another cause of the twentieth-century crisis of poetry is what Milosz calls "the lesson of biology." In his view, the progressive application of Darwinism to the social sciences has thoroughly refashioned our imagination: it made us more and more disposed to interpret the human world in the categories of biological determinism. Moreover, the historical upheavals of our times have persuaded us that not only human beings but also human civilizations are mortal. All of this is totally at odds with the poet's natural tendency to look at the world, as it were, with the eyes of a child—a child who still believes in the criteria of good and evil. If the poet in our century retains such blessed naïveté, he is nevertheless constantly pressured by the cynical "adults" to respect so-called naked facts. Even though he may instinctively try to resist this pressure, he can no longer rely on old categories and ideals. As a result, the poet of today is "ashamed of the child in himself": the "lesson of biology" teaches him more often than not to give up his childlike rectitude.

Another reason for poetry's vitiated role is described by Milosz as a classicist temptation. The poet can trade in his social bonds for an attitude of haughty self-isolation; he can trade in his moral steadfastness for biological determinism; he can trade in his fidelity to the real world for compliance with ready-made conventions. Common to all three is the choosing of an easy, simple, undemanding solution. Such a charge against classicism may puzzle Milosz's readers for a while: isn't he himself usually labeled a classicist? In fact, even though he may occasion-

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ally have been attracted by classicism, he views it as a temptation which should be resisted. Poetry in our epoch is a battle between realism and classicism, faithfulness to the external world and adherence to the internal rules of art. The use of poetic convention makes contact with the reader possible, but at the same time it builds a glass wall separating the poet from reality. Thus, the division between the word and human experience grows continuously, dividing mankind into "those who know but do not speak" and "those who speak but do not know."

After this general analysis of dangers hovering over contemporary poetry, Milosz turns again to the poetry of a specific place and time. His fifth lecture, entitled "Ruins and Poetry," tells the story of the experiences of Polish poetry during the Second World War. Faced with the threat of physical extermination and the annihilation of culture, Polish authors were compelled to re-think the most essential questions concerning the tasks of poetry and its functions within a community. The apocalypse of the war simplified everything in a positive and creative sense: it created a need to give the new reality a name, to comprehend what seemed to be incomprehensible, to find hope in what was apparently hopeless. Paradoxically, the catastrophe of war restored some hierarchy of moral values and revived realism. It also proved to be a cure for poetry's isolation, since poets were facing the same dangers as other people. One of the unexpected results of the war and the disintegration of the European cultural tradition has been—at least for Polish poets and writers—the renewed belief that "the great schism in poetry is curable."

Milosz's last lecture, "On Hope," opens with a question. "What if the lament so widely spread in poetry today proves to be a prophetic response to the hopeless situation in which mankind has found itself?" What, in other words, if poetic catastrophism happens to be confirmed by some ultimate catastrophe? As I said before—and as every reader of Milosz knows very well—the author of *The Captive Mind* has never been a thoughtless optimist. In fact, he discerns in contemporary history "a kind of race between the lifegiving and the destructive activity of civilization's bacteria," whose final result is unknown and can be only vaguely apprehended by the prophetic imagination of poets. In Milosz's view, however, there is reason if not for optimism then for the rejection of hopelessness. He sees humanity as having emerged as "an elemental force," which in our time replaces the anachronistic structures based on class distinctions and social hierarchies. Culturally, this means that "man is opening up to science and art on an unprecedented scale": there is a growing demand for culture as a source of knowledge about mankind's own past. This enormous demand is still not fully realized and satisfied by culture itself. Nevertheless, it offers new opportunities—especially to poetry, which in its function as "the witness" proves to be a particularly ample means of making the past an element of our present and relating universal problems of the human condition to a given place and time.

It would be hard to overestimate the weight and significance of Milosz's six lectures. By the strength of its condensed and lucid exposition, *The Witness of Poetry* provides us with a key to Milosz's poetic historiosophy, philosophy, and aesthetics. Of course, Milosz's entire work offers one of the most profound responses to the dilemmas of our century. His opposition to commonplace beliefs, according to which our civilization has no perspectives and the alienation of culture is an irreversible fact, seems perhaps more natural to his Polish reader. After all, in countries such as Poland contemporary poetry more than once proved indispensable to society's existence; its role as a witness to reality, a defense against oppression, and as a source of hope is not an abstract axiom but the concrete and personal experience of many people. To quote once again Milosz's poem, it is indeed no exaggeration to say

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that poetry can sometimes "save nations or people." While reading the words about "humanity as an elemental force" one cannot help recalling the sixteen months of Solidarity when poems by Milosz (among others) were printed in workers' newsletters along with unionist appeals and political analyses. Still, the reaction of my American friend seems to me significant, too. Milosz's defense of hope will most probably provoke even more caustic reactions from those Western intellectuals whose monotonous laments over the helplessness of contemporary culture are their main contributions to it. Let them at least remember that while their despair is one of the easiest solutions, Milosz's hope is hard-earned.

Masters of rhetoric

S. J. Freedberg Circa 1600: A Revolution of Style in Italian Painting. Harvard University Press, 114 pages, $25

reviewed by Charles Dempsey

Sydney Freedberg, who retires this year from Harvard and will assume the position of Chief Curator at the National Gallery of Art in the fall, is one of America's best-known art historians and the author of the standard English-language history of Italian High Renaissance and Mannerist painting. Here he publishes three lectures, originally given at Cornell, each devoted to one of the three great masters of the emerging Baroque style in Italy: Annibale Carracci, his cousin Ludovico Carracci, and Michelangelo da Caravaggio. The book is densely illustrated, and its text informed by an acute and consistent critical intelligence. Because it also represents in a lively and sophisticated way the current state of thought about its subject, it provides an ideal introduction to the painting of these extraordinarily interesting and complex masters. This is a timely accomplishment, for, although Caravaggio is certainly well known, Annibale Carracci is considerably less so, while Ludovico Carracci, about whom almost nothing has been written in English, is scarcely known at all except to specialists. And yet it is the Carracci who rose to one of the rarest of human achievements, comparable to those of Giotto and Leonardo da Vinci. They not only mastered their own styles, but also established the conventions and standards of a period style, the style we call Baroque, which was to dominate European painting for two centuries to come. Caravaggio was the first painter to create a personal style on the basis of their discoveries. And it was he who made problematical the twin foundations of their art—the imitation of nature on the one hand, the imitation of the idea on the other.

The most frequently stated theme of Counter-reformatory criticism, ever since the unveiling of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in 1541, had been that the artist had a duty to represent the truth, and that the inventions, ornaments, and difficulties of art should not be exalted for their own sake. This was especially true with regard to religious art, which had as its purpose the instruction of the ignorant, not the appreciation of the knowledgeable. The question of purpose thus raised is essential to an understanding of the critical antinomies of seventeenth-century art. The reform of painting initiated by the Carracci (and the linguistic parallel with Church reform is not fortuitous) was based first of all on investigating the means for establishing a convincing illusion of external reality. There was an attempt to make the image *verosimile* by manipulating the effects of light and color (effects Freedberg aptly calls "optical") and by avoiding the artificiality of pose and expression that appears in Mannerist painting of the previous generation. Second, it was based on investigating the idealized perfections of nature and on selecting those perfections in the manner of the great classical masters, with the purpose of leading the spectator to an understanding of eternal reality, the *vero*. The idea of truth, in other words, had to be expressed with naturalistic verisimilitude.

Renaissance painters had conceived of

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practice as the first step on a ladder leading to the discovery of theoretical principle, knowledge that was itself expressed in the perfection of style. But the Carracci placed theory and practice in parallel, conceiving them both as means to an end. Caravaggio, who exploited the illusionistic techniques they had developed in dazzling counterfeits of quotidian reality, polarized the two ideas of truth they had attempted to unite in their reform. For to distinguish the imitation of natural appearances (as his paintings were perceived to do) from the imitation of idealized perfections (as the Mannerist paintings of the Cavaliere d'Arpino were perceived to do) reopened the question of purpose, and in the very act of painting itself. At any given moment, one had to decide whether one was imitating the natural or imitating the ideal. In this decision lay the fundamental question of the conception of truth to which one's art was committed. For the seventeenth-century critic Bellori both painters had fallen into error. He characterized them both as slaves to practice, the one merely copying nature, the other merely copying an already defined idea of style. On the one hand painting had become an optical technique for giving an illusion of reality, and on the other it had become an imaginative technique for representing an artistic idea. In either case painting had become, or seemed to have become, *only painting,* an illusionary phantasm unattached to any permanent truth.

If the painters of the High Renaissance, on the basis of antiquity, reinvented the concept of style, a concept central to the period of Mannerism, then the painters of the Baroque first confronted the question of style as a matter of critical and moral choice. The solution of the Carracci had been to assimilate the various ideas of natural perfections discovered by the canonical masters—imitating the perfection of *chiaroscuro* discovered by Titian, for instance—and then to join these to the naturalistic effects of possible experience. They thereby extended the particularities of reality into the permanence of history, while simultaneously endowing history with immediate verisimilitude. The realism of Caravaggio was a particular reality outside history, and the idealism of the Cavaliere d'Arpino represented a historical idea divorced from experience. For all painters, however, as the Italian critic Argan has acutely observed, painting remained a technique, and specifically a technique for persuasion.

At one time the rhetorical foundation to Baroque art seemed very obvious, and it was accordingly anathematized in the nineteenth century as an art that was false and propagandistic, serving an authoritarian church whose political and religious policies bore a close resemblance to those of the Church of Pius IX. It is certainly true that the persuasive capabilities of art were used by the Church for its own ends. It is true too that the Carracci reform of painting must in part be understood as a response to problems raised in Counter-reformation criticism. At the same time it would be absurd to reduce the whole of Baroque art and its themes to the articles of faith published by the Propaganda Fidei. Within that art is deep poetry and a profoundly new, recognizably modern sensibility. The criticism of this century has attempted to explain this by denying the connection between sensibility and the "speciousness" of rhetoric and the "formulas" of the academies. Accordingly, the rhetoric of Baroque art no longer seems so clear as once it did, and Freedberg is an able spokesman for this prevailing critical position.

Yet rhetoric in itself is morally neutral, and exists as a means to describe the techniques and effects of style. To conceive of painting as a means of persuasion is necessarily to set a value on individual experience and the phenomena of psychological response. It is also to give special importance to the role of the spectator, to whom the painting is addressed and whose own experience and presence become integral to the act of painting. Freedberg writes eloquently of the effects of this new sensibility in Caravaggio's *St. John with a Ram*: "Caravaggio

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here has created a voyeuristic situation into which the spectator, as he takes the painter's place in front of the completed canvas, must necessarily fall . . . . [W]hat is meaningful comes from the relationship established initially between the artist and the model and then, as we are the surrogate for the painter when we look at the picture, between the model-image and ourselves." This is the same kind of experience, merging artist and spectator in the act of painting, that Michael Fried has characterized in Courbet's paintings. It also informs Freedberg's description of the absorptive character of Caravaggio's *Beheading of St. John the Baptist*: "The violence and drama have not been described, but instead the moment that is the aftermath of one and the prelude to the other. The tonality of this situation is in fact contrary to that of drama, especially if we imply by drama something that conveys the sense of being staged. What we have been presented with appears, oppositely, an actuality, a moment of present truth, a 'now.'"

For Freedberg such effects are not rhetorical, but their opposite. He uses the word "rhetorical" regularly and consistently to designate characteristics in painting that might otherwise be called "stylizing," or even "classically derived." Such characteristics are opposed to "reality" or "verisimilitude." In other words, his use of the word is metaphorical, not technical or historical. This is not of itself objectionable in a book that presents itself as based almost entirely on the author's confrontation with the "visual substance" of the works of art. At the same time, insisting on the exclusive use of the eye, even so critical and knowledgeable an eye as Freedberg's, carries with it obvious dangers. Assessing art that is expressly conceived as a means of persuasion through sensory illusion offers special difficulties. Thus Freedberg writes of Annibale Carracci's first dated altarpiece, the *Crucifixion with Saints* of 1583, that "it conveys an instant sense of reality," portraying figures who "convince us still more that they reproduce an ordinary truth because they have abjured altogether the effects of artifice," and that "never before this within the sixteenth century had an image been created with so minimal an intrusion of the processes of idealization, with such avoidance of the means of rhetoric, or with so blunt a confrontation with the simple truth." Freedberg writes of another early painting by Annibale, the *Dead Christ,* that its religious subject is not its primary meaning, but may be only a pretext for a tour de force of realism, conceived in the manner of a still life or genre piece.

It is instructive to compare these observations with what another perceptive critic, Argan, has written about the art established on the basis of the paintings of the Carracci and Caravaggio:

> Art became a technique of persuasion that must take into account, not only its own means and possibilities, but also the dispositions of the people to whom it is addressed. Like rhetoric, and not differently from dialectic, it does not have its own subject but applies itself to all subjects and therefore has an infinite variety of species. It does not investigate nature proposing to increase knowledge, but investigates with almost scientific detachment the human soul, elaborating with all possible means the ways to unveil its responses. Thus it creates a landscape, which certainly does not derive from a new and more vivid experience of nature, it makes astounding perspectival constructions that do not derive from new meditations on the problem of space, it invents the genre of still life without any special interest in the quality of objects, and it paints scenes of popular life without concrete social interest. But each of these modes corresponds to a profound public need, touching upon and moving the affective sensibilities. It affirms the proposition in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that the verisimilar is not substantially different from the true, even as the enthymeme is not substantially different from the syllogism. Nor is this an indication of cynical or desperate indifference in confrontation with the true, but only proof of the analogous effect of the true and the verisimilar aimed towards the goal of persuasion. It is certainly true, as also appears in the *Rhetoric,* that technique, in the very moment that it

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> produces the verisimilar or the probable, must conceal itself and not reveal its own artifice. *Ars est celare artem,* or, in the words of Tasso, "l'arte che tutto fa, nulla si scopre."

Freedberg acknowledges the power of that "art which hides all art" when he writes that Annibale's figures "*convince* us that they reproduce an ordinary truth," and that Caravaggio's *Beheading of St. John the Baptist* "*appears* an actuality, a moment of present truth, a 'now'" (italics mine). What he does not acknowledge is the source of his conviction, which has been elicited by a refinement of the techniques of art, not their opposite. He has been persuaded by the plain and unadorned style, the simple and finely woven style called *subtilis* by the orators. He is not alone among modern scholars and critics in denying the existence or the relevance of the very means—abstract, systematic, academic, and rhetorical—by which artists made considered choices, and by which he himself has been convinced of the present truth, the "now" in their art. Specific analysis of the techniques for creating verisimilitude and the effects of the probable is one foundation to Baroque style. The other is an intensive investigation of the means of artifice. It is the combination of the two, an enhanced naturalism *and* an enhanced artificiality, that distinguishes art after the Carracci reform from an art that flaunts its own skill, from the kind of display for which Michelangelo had been attacked and which characterizes the art of Mannerism.

Freedberg is himself a master of rhetoric. The strength of his perceptions is enhanced by the clarity and consistency with which he employs a series of specific terms (optical, rhetorical, Mannerist, Baroque, Classical, and the like). They are terms that belong to a contemporary rhetoric of stylistic description, not to the seventeenth century. This inevitably produces occasional anomalies. To call Correggio "proto-Baroque," for example, suggests that something may be wrong with our model of High Renaissance style if it cannot absorb the optical coloristic effects of a painter who died in 1534. The chapters on Annibale Carracci and Caravaggio are excellent and filled with illuminating insights, especially with regard to Caravaggio. The chapter on Ludovico is less good, and precisely because much less has been written on this astonishingly original artist than on the other two. But it is especially welcome to have a profusely illustrated essay about him in English, especially by so thoughtful and experienced a critic.

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Letters

American orchestras

To the Editors:
Samuel Lipman's analysis of the present fate of some of our greatest orchestras ("Room on the Podium?" April, 1983) is stern but on balance enlightening.

In technical terms, the quality of our great orchestras has never been better, but listening to these orchestras on record from twenty and thirty years ago does reveal great music-making from conductors like Szell, Munch, Reiner, Mitropoulos, and Walter, to mention only a few. Perhaps only the Chicago Symphony under Solti maintains those high conductorial standards today.

In terms of commitment to a city and an institution, I would like to point out that Pierre Boulez, the previous music director of the New York Philharmonic, did participate in the musical life of New York with his inauguration of the popular "Rug" concerts at Fisher Hall, his Prospective Encounter concerts, his participation in concerts by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and in television performances and so forth. I believe also that André Previn participates in the musical life of Pittsburgh, and he is, though not native born, an American.

Three names should be added to any list of American music directors waiting for a great orchestra. They are: Dennis Russell Davies, David Zinman, and John Nelson.

These conductors and the four Mr. Lipman mentions (Leonard Slatkin, Gerard Schwarz, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Jorge Mester) are well known to me as an orchestra player and as a concert-goer. All are or have been music directors of major symphony orchestras in the United States, and all deserve a chance to participate in the major orchestra music-director-lottery-game.

Philip West
Eastman School of Music
Rochester, New York

Fiction

To the Editors:
I cannot recall another example of a new magazine of art and letters having achieved such a singular impact in so short a time as *The New Criterion* has. At the conclusion of the magazine's splendid first year of publication, I would like to make a suggestion.

I urge you to run fiction—fiction that exemplifies the standards the magazine was created to uphold. Your critical points are thereby illuminated by example, and your readers are allowed to slake the thirst that criticism and commentary (however first rate) inevitably engenders.

I believe this would be a further triumph for *The New Criterion*. As the modern young woman said to her date, "Don't just talk about. Do it."

David Evanier
The Paris Review
New York City

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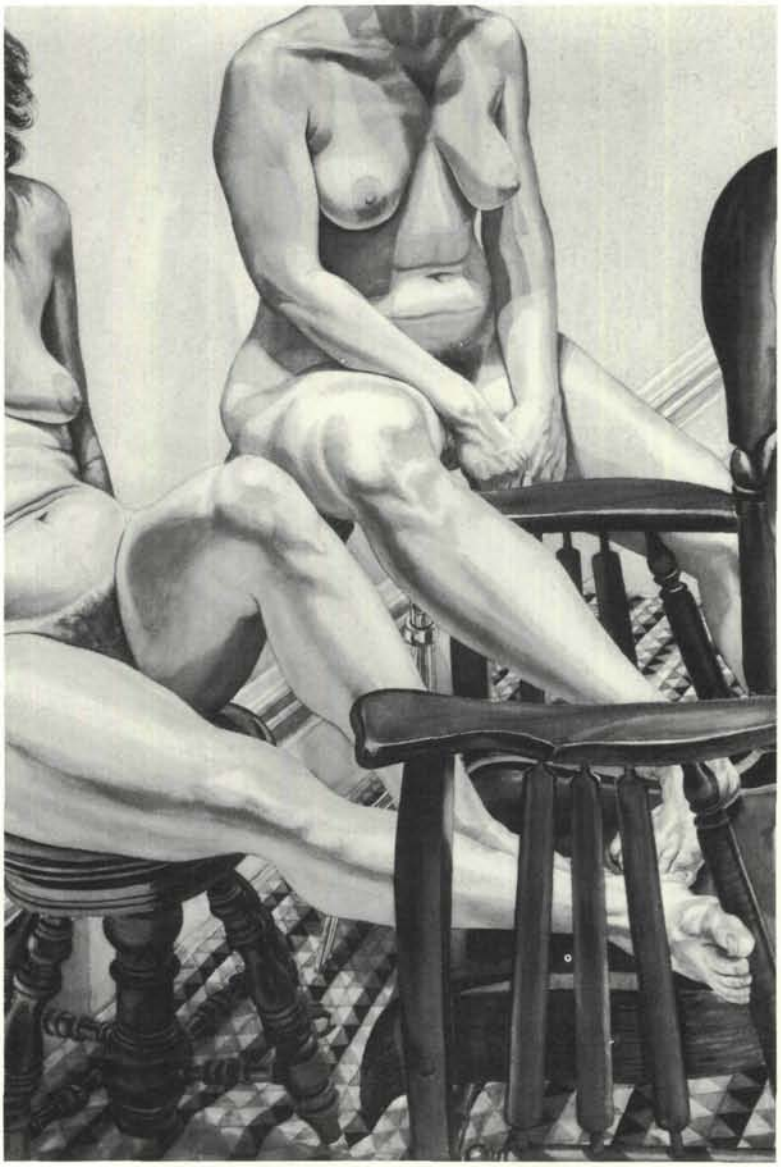

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